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A vast majority of the drummers for award winning pop and R&B artists began their formative training as young musicians performing contemporary gospel music in churches. Drummers trained this way obtain particular skill sets and techniques, and produce a characteristic sound referred to as "gospel chops."

The goal of this study was to trace the brief history of contemporary gospel drumming, detail its technical evolution, and argue for the importance of the style. Through the analysis of listening examples and interviews conducted with prominent drummers, four main elements were determined: (1) the evolution of contemporary gospel drumming is a result of heightened technical ability, influence and changes within gospel music, (2) the formative training in gospel drumming has exposed young musicians to various genres of music and provided the ability to adapt to such genres, (3) although the contemporary gospel drummer has been equipped with technical and musical skills, the implementation and maturity of young artists needs to be addressed, and (4) gospel drumming has become a highly sought-after style of performance and has gradually been accepted within the drumming community.

THE EVOLUTION OF CONTEMPORARY GOSPEL DRUMMING

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my brother, Jamiel Rashun Lawhorn. As kids, while riding around in his Pontiac Grand Am and listening to Kirk Franklin's *Christmas* album, I became discouraged in my talent after hearing the drummer (Erik Morgan) play a fill. He turned to me and said, "Don't worry, some day two brothers will be riding around listening to you play." That moment has been a part of my motivation ever since.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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First, I would like to thank God for being the "Provider of the Gift." My request was made known and You provided my every need.

To my mother, thank you for nurturing my musical interest and supporting me in every endeavor.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The style of performance that was once hidden within African-American churches has now become a highly coveted art form: contemporary gospel drumming. During the early era of gospel music in the 1940s, drums were not used in services or musical recordings of churches. In the 1960s, artists such as Bobby "Blue" Bland and Ray Charles used gospel-influenced music accompanied with a drum set which was viewed very negatively by the church. By 1970, popular gospel artists such as Shirley Caesar, Aretha Franklin and the Hawkins Family began to use drums in gospel performances and recordings. Through the 1980s, church drummers were influenced by local and regional artists, and were also inspired by those outside of gospel music as the playing style continued to evolve. By the mid 1990s into the 21st century, gospel drummers became highly sought after and first-call studio musicians. As such, they were invited to perform with leading artists in hip-hop, R&B, soul and many other genres for their world tours. Gospel drumming has greatly impacted the percussion community, and over the last 20 years has become a widely sought-after playing style.

The world of gospel drumming has infrequently discussed in research literature, and this study will help to uncover the history behind the art. Gospel music was established as a genre in the early 1900s, but there has not been a scholarly, research-

driven document that examines the evolution of gospel drumming. In recent years, however, there have been efforts to bring the art of gospel drumming to the forefront of musical discussions.

In 2005, Gerald Forrest created the website GospelChops.com in an effort to showcase the genre of gospel music and to highlight many of the style characteristics demonstrated by the gospel musicians of the time.[1] On this website, musicians were showcased through a series of "shed sessions." Through this website, drummers began to identify themselves primarily as "gospel drummers," due to their playing capabilities being labeled as "gospel chops."

Although contemporary gospel drumming has been an evolving genre since the 1960s, there has been no comprehensive pedagogical discussion of this style. Instructional books and videos are available to assist players in this particular approach, but there is no information on the development of the playing style. This study will assist future musicians in learning the historical background of gospel drumming and also help to outline the progressions of this percussive style.

Purpose of Study

The goal of this research was to trace the evolution of contemporary gospel drumming from 1968 through 2012. Through the study of literature review and analysis of listening examples, this research details the evolution of the genre's stylistic traits from early simple drum patterns to the current highly technical, energetic, and virtuosic

[1] About, *www.gospelchops.com,* accessed February 2nd, 2014, http://www.gospelchops.com/?page_id=12.

displays of musicianship. With the rise in the musical demands requested of the gospel drummer, corresponding techniques have progression from those used during the early periods of gospel music. By conducting interviews with prominent drummers, the following four research questions were answered: (1) How has gospel drumming evolved? (2) What is the importance of gospel drumming? (3) How have secular styles and performers influenced the drumming within gospel music? and (4) How has the technique, including fills and solos, expanded in application and difficulty? The evolution of the playing styles has been identified through four main categories: (1) drum and song introductions, (2) regional-based fills, (3) shout music and (4) drum solos, interludes, and reprises. Detailed transcriptions of performances have been completed to assist in the overall comprehension of gospel drumming.

Survey of Research

Existing literature covers the history of gospel music with an emphasis placed on the spiritual connections between music and God. Books such as Jon Michael Spencer's *Protest & Praise*: *Sacred Music of Black Religion* examine the evolution of gospel music, tracing the development from the spiritual, through social-gospel hymnody, to songs of the civil-rights movement, and the blues.[2] There are numerous publications written on the history of traditional gospel music with the post World War II influence of Thomas A. Dorsey.[3] The film, *Too Close to Heaven: The History of Gospel Music,*[4] offers a vivid

[2] Ibid.

[3] Michael Tanner, "A Brief History of Anthem, Spiritual, and Gospel Music from Early Slavery to the Mid Twentieth Century," *Central Coast Public* Radio, July 16, 2013, www.kusp.org.

account of the birth of gospel music from adversity. The film provides great detail relative to the traditions carried on through slavery and the progression of gospel music despite variations in black churches. The film also presents the influences of secular music on gospel music, which contributed to the expansion of contemporary gospel music, as well as the adoption of a new label for gospel artists: *New Traditionalists.*

Along with film productions, instructional DVDs have been released to inform the public of the gospel drumming playing style. Hudson Music has released six DVDs that feature drumming within the gospel-music genre and the 2006 Modern Drummer Festival DVD is one of six videos in this series.[5] This particular festival included the historic R&B/Gospel Summit featuring four of the top gospel and R&B drummers of the current day: Teddy Campbell (Britney Spears), Gerald Heyward (Beyoncé), Aaron Spears (Usher) and the late gospel great, Marvin McQuitty (Fred Hammond). Each artist performed his individual solo immediately followed by a shed session[6] for a live audience.

Scholarly articles on the subject of gospel music are vast, including historical timelines and the influences of black churches on the genre. However, articles specific to gospel drumming are scarce. Daniel Stadnicki, a Ph.D. student at the University of Alberta, wrote a scholarly paper, which he later discussed at a university presentation entitled "*Enjoying Gospel Drumming: The Problematic Interpretation of Black*

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[4] *Too Close to Heaven: The Story of Gospel Music*, authored by Alan Lewens and Leo St. Clair (1996; Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1997) DVD.

[5] *Modern Drummer Festival 2006*, directed by Dave Diomedi, (2006; Briarcliff, NY: Hudson Music, 2007), DVD.

[6] "About," *Gospelchops,* accessed February 2nd, 2014. http://www.gospelchops.com/?page_id=12.

Musicianship Via Post-Racial Ideology."[7] This paper examines the implications of post-racial ideology as a "progressive" form of anti-racism established in the twenty-first century. Stadnicki argues that post-racial positions can: (1) detrimentally affect collective understandings of difference, (2) diminish the persistence of racism and the difficult history of race relations in North America, and (3) pose a number of theoretical issues for the study of popular music and culture. This work draws on Stadnicki's fieldwork research of Black Pentecostal "gospel drumming" and the mainstream drumming industry in order to frame the discussion.[8]

Outside of the above-mentioned literature and sources, the amount of information referencing gospel drumming and the evolution of the craft is limited. There are numerous interviews where musicians discuss their introduction to gospel music, but there is not a collective resource of scholarly research articles on the development of their specific approaches and techniques used. The Gospel and R&B Drumming DVD[9] released by Hudson Music is hosted by Jeff "Lo" Davis, who is known as the "Father of gospel drumming." During an extended interview, Davis gives a personal account of his evolution through gospel music, his opinion on where gospel drumming is today, and insight on why the art is important.

The information found within published articles, musical examples, and conducted interviews, aided in the musical analysis and discussions when referencing

[7] Daniel Stadnicki, Enjoying Gospel Drumming: Interpreting Black Music Through Post-Racist Ideology, (presentation, University of Montreal, Montreal, Canada, May 2012).

[8] Ibid.

[9] *Gospel and R&B Drumming*, hosted by Jeff Davis (2011; Briarcliff, NY: Hudson Music, 2013), DVD.

fills, drumming introductions, common patterns, and the various approaches that many of the notable gospel musicians use in their playing. Both Aaron Spears (The Gideon Band, Usher)[10] and George "Spanky" McCurdy (Tye Tribbett, Lady Gaga)[11] have released videos through Hudson Music that outline their approach to drum set playing, incorporate their gospel influence, and include some transcriptions. The extant research will be used to highlight the conflict between musical evolution and traditional religious beliefs as contemporary gospel music and the drumming began to include styles of secular influence.

Method of Research

With the wide range of gospel music available, the selected music in this study was limited to certain artists who produced music evolving from the previous era that contained virtuosic drumming. The research procedures included: (1) the analysis of fills, grooves and patterns in gospel music between the years of the 1968 and 2012, (2) the transcriptions of fills, grooves, and patterns and (3) interviews conducted with notable drummers who were performers during the identified era and/or performing within the genre of gospel music.

The impetus for analysis was to uncover the technical development hidden within the recorded music of the era to explain the evolution of gospel drumming. Rhythmic patterns were identified using musical analysis: these rhythmic patterns intensified in

[10] *Aaron Spears: Beyond the Chops – Groove, Musicality and Technique*, directed by Rob Wallis (2009, Briarcliff, NY: Hudson Music, 2009), DVD.

[11] *George Spanky McCurdy on Drums: Off Time/On Time,* performed by George "Spanky" McCurdy (2013; Briarcliff, NY: Hudson Music, 2013), DVD.

speed, technique, and musical application by gospel drummers over time. Noted drum set historian and publisher Daniel Glass, stated, "The evolution is in the music,"[12] and the analysis helped to provide data on how the drumming of the era evolved with the music. The music identified in this study was attained through commercially available recordings found on media sources such as CDs, DVDs, iTunes®, and YouTube®. Other outlets that identified recorded audio, video with album credit identification such as www.allmusic.com were also used.

Through listening analysis, similar fills, grooves, and patterns were identified. Once the musical examples were chosen, transcriptions were notated to indicate how the fill, groove or pattern incorporated similar traits from the gospel music of previous years. The analysis of the transcriptions revealed themes highlighting various changes in techniques placed in the following four categories: (1) drum and song introductions, (2) Brooklyn fills, (3) *kratophany* and shout music, and (4) drum solos and musical interludes. Musical selections were generally transcribed in real-time. When the patterns and fills became too difficult to understand in at its original tempo, an application entitled Rift Master Pro®[13] was used in an effort to slow down the selections to isolate the rhythms for notation.

Facilitated data collection pertaining to the research subject. The interviewees provided first-hand accounts of performing situations and musical decisions that affected the evolution of gospel drumming. In addition, the performers helped to uncover the

[12] Daniel Glass in conversation with author, November 2012.

[13] TMS Trading Pty. Ltd, "Riff Master Pro," Apple App Store, Version 4.2 (2013), www.riffmasterpro.com, (accessed March 17, 2014).

ideas and influences that changed how gospel music, and more specifically the drumming, was performed. The interviews also yielded useful information about influential artists of specific regions of the United States.

Definitions

Terms pertaining to drumming in this study include:

Chops: A term that refers to the technical virtuosity that a drummer possesses.[14]

Fills: Rhythmic variation played on the drums that delineate the end of a musical phrase or section.[15]

Ghost Note: Light, accompanying and unaccented note.

Kratophany: 1) a manifestation of power rendered through the spoken word and its accompanying gestures.[16] 2) The surplus of deep stirrings, intensity, and zeal within the African spirit, easily expressed in African Languages by means of rhythm, tone, and pitch.[17]

Lick: A musical fragment or phrase that exists within the common vocabulary of gospel drummers.[18]

Linear Drumming/Fills: An approach where each drum surface—be it the hi-hat cymbal, snare, kick, and toms—is performed separately, creating a unique, broken up effect.[19]

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[14] Neeraj Mehta in conversation with author, April 2014.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Stephen A. Marini, *Sacred Song in America* (University of Illinois Press, 2003), 115.

[17] Jon Michael Spencer, *Black Hymnody: A Hymnological History of the African American Church* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978) 3-49.

[18] Neeraj Mehta in conversation with author, April 2014.

[19] Daniel Stadnicki, Enjoying Gospel Drumming: Interpreting Black Music Through Post-Racist Ideology, (presentation, University of Montreal, Montreal, Canada, May 2012).

Open-Handed Playing: Playing with the right hand on the snare as the left hand moves to the hi-hat. [20]

In the pocket: Playing together, with or without a vocal accompaniment, perfectly on-beat and never missing a note or going off tempo in any way.[21]

Shed Session: 1) A platform where musicians congregate and perform together in an open environment.[22] 2) A gathering where a group of musicians practice together while trading musical ideas including but not limited to fills, grooves, and patterns.

Shout Music: A style of music that accompanies Kratophany (also known as "Bump"). This music is performed at a brisk tempo with the bass drum played on beats one and three, the snare on beats 2 and 4, and a moving bass line similar to a walking jazz/blues line.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

Limitations of this research include: (1) the availability of album credit information, (2) the time constraints of the interviewees, (3) personal analysis and self-reporting, and (4) the time constraints of the project.

The information that gave credit to gospel artist/musicians was disorganized and unclear. Sites such as www.allmusic.com and www.discogs.com were notable sources for album credits, however their information was not current.

Professional and touring musicians were the primary source for interviews, but conflicts in scheduling limited their availability for in-person or phone interviews.

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[20] Don Famularo and Claus Hessler, *Open-Handed Playing*, (Los Angeles, CA: Alfred Music, 2008).

[21] "In the Pocket," *Urban Dictionary,* accessed November 2, 2014, http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=In%20the%20Pocket.

[22] "About," *Gospelchops,* http://www.gospelchops.com/?page_id=12.

Because of this, electronic interview questions were sent and the interviewees responded to these questions. In addition, information from previously published interviews was utilized.

Given the extensive history of gospel drumming, only select artists were chosen for this project. Because this is the first work of its kind, artists deserving of recognition may not have been selected. Additionally, the amount of time available for the completion of this document and the time constraints of the interviewed artists affected artist selection. Artists not interviewed for the present study may be interviewed in the future.

Delimitations

The delimitations of this study are: (1) this study only covered music in the style of traditional gospel music where drumming virtuosity was present, and (2) this study only reviewed literature that pertained to drumming, gospel drumming, or any materials connected to gospel music and/or gospel drumming.

This research covered solo artists, artists with background singers/choirs, and small group choirs who were viewed as *New Traditionalist* artists. These artists embody the hope of many for a return to community values, where the music and the gospel are inseparable. Through their music, the artists show that the message of faith does not have to be diluted to become successful with a young urban audience.[23] If a mass choir was included, it was because of the nature of the drumming included within the music.

[23] *Too Close to Heaven: The Story of Gospel Music*, Authored by Alan Lewens and Leo St. Clair (1996; Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1997) DVD.

Finally, this research included individual songs or interludes displaying virtuosic drum set performance.

CHAPTER II

THE EVOLUTION OF CONTEMPORARY GOSPEL DRUMMING

The use of percussion has long been a part of religious and ritualistic music. In the Bible, King David stated, "Praise Him upon the loud cymbals and praise him upon high sounding cymbals."[24] Heinrich Biber composed "Salzburger Festmesse" in 1682, which served as the first major sacred music featuring two timpani and two players.[25] *Bàtá* drumming can be traced to the early 1800s and was found in West African tribes such as the Yoruba people.[26] During the slave trade of the mid-1800s, slave owners removed a great deal of African traditions, instruments and culture from the people. Authentic instruments were replaced with body percussion such as handclaps and foot stomps to circumvent the use of traditional instruments. For example, the movie *Glory*[27] portrayed a vivid scene of Civil War soldiers camped around a fire, clapping and singing during a makeshift worship service.

In the early 20th century, hand instruments like the tambourine began to make their way into the African American worship service. For example, *The Color Purple*

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[24] Ps. 150:5 KJV.

[25] James Blades, *Percussion Instruments and their history* (White Plains, NY: Bold Strummer, 1970/1992), 236.

[26] Ademọla Adegbite, "The Drum and its Role Yoruba Religion," *Journal of Religion in Africa* vol. 18, fasc. 1 (1988) : 16.

[27] *Glory,* multiple formats, directed by Edward Zwick, (1989, USA; Tristar Pictures, 1990), VHS.

contained a scene of the African- American church service displaying the use of the tambourines.[28] Another element also present in *The Color Purple* was the church's disassociation from and non-acceptance of secular music in the church.

By the mid 20th century, artists such as Bobby "Blue" Bland and Ray Charles began to use the music commonly found in the church within their compositions, but substituted the spiritual lyrics for secular content. Bands accompanied these artists with piano, guitar, string bass, a horn section (trumpet, saxophone and trombone) and drums. Traditional church congregations considered early jazz and blues music to be "the Devil's music" and the use of drums was not acceptable in the church. Shirley Caesar, considered to be the "First Lady of Gospel Music" who began her career in the late 1940s, was not featured on a recording that contained drums until 1958 with the Gospel Caravans.

The 1960s and 1970s

On a more modest scale, gospel musicians began traveling and performing concerts, while charging admission fees and successfully transforming gospel into a commercial venture. Concerts and recordings helped gospel music reach a wider, multiracial audience. In the late 1960s, the hit "Oh Happy Day"[29] recorded by the Edwin Hawkins's Singers was included on "Top 40" lists, which further broadened the diversity of listeners.[30] As gospel music developed, writers and musical commentators continued

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[28] *The Color Purple*, closed-caption, directed by Stephen Spielberg, (1985, USA: Warner Home Video, 1986), VHS.

[29] Edward Hawkins and the Edward Hawkins Singers, *Oh Happy Day,* LP, (Pavillion Records, 1968).

[30] Gerardo Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 61.

to assert the distinctiveness of black musicality. The Frenchman Olivier Despax characterized African Americans, saying, "Negro musicians have a unique character: a spirit of their own, one which the whites lack, a kind of ferocity of rhythm, a violence which they call 'swing.' They have a great deal of sensitivity, but a brutal sensitivity, absolutely not the sensitivity of whites."[31] The 1960s and 1970s brought new forms of gospel that incorporated electronic instruments including synthesizers, bass guitars, and drums.[32] Just as the 1970s ushered in soul and R&B music, gospel artists began to gradually mimic the musical make up of their respective groups.

Walter Hawkins and the Love Center Choir released several groundbreaking gospel albums. As the drummer for Walter Hawkins, Joel Smith influenced the young musicians of the time and future generations. With the variations of styles featured within Hawkins' music, Joel Smith introduced new drumming techniques and ideas to support these adaptations. The tune "Strange" from the album *Jesus Christ is the Way*[33] featured an up-tempo swing pattern that was not present in gospel music before this time. Smith introduced ghost notes to the fairly new instrument now found in gospel music. Similar to Max Roach in the era of bebop jazz, Joel Smith served as a trailblazer in the use of drum set in gospel music. After Walter Hawkins began to release his four *Love Alive*[34] albums in the 1970s, Joel Smith provided the drumming to accompany these songs that helped to

[31] David Strauss, "French Critics and American Jazz," *American Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (Autumn, 1965): 583.

[32] Gerardo Marti, *Worship Across the Racial Divide* (2012), 61.

[33] Walter Hawkins, *Jesus Christ is the Way*, (Light Records, 1977), cassette tape.

[34] Walter Hawkins, *Love Alive I*, (Light Records, 1975), cassette tape.

formulate the sound of gospel music. Smith brought about an emotion behind the drum set that inspired future drummers. Calvin Rodgers states, "When I heard those drums, it just completely arrested me, and I thought to myself, 'This is the way I want to play drums.'"[35] Joel Smith's playing on the introduction of "Until I Found the Lord"[36] helped to advance the level of performance in gospel drumming. The funk groove and fills displayed by Smith showcased a new approach that became accepted in gospel music.

When Andre Crouch appeared on the gospel scene in the early 1970s, the "pop-gospel" as labeled by Guthrie Ramsey, was seen as a hybrid – and quite controversial – expression of their day.[37] As Crouch's impact spread around the gospel community, his pop style of music began to surface in church sanctuaries. Bill Maxwell laid the musical foundation for Crouch, not only as a drummer but also as a producer. Maxwell stood as one of the first gospel drummers to receive credit as a producer on gospel albums. With his musical approach, Maxwell consistently remained within the pocket and his contribution to gospel drumming in the 1970s helped shape a foundation for the 1980s style of performance by playing for the music while establishing space and time.

[35] Calvin Rodgers interview with author, May 2014.

[36] Walter Hawkins, *Love Alive II,* (Light Records, 1978), cassette tape.

[37] Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., *Race Music: Black Cultures from Bebop to Hip-Hop* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003), 191.

The Early 1980s

Gospel music of the early 1980s followed the hybridity trend of smooth-soul sounds and simplicity in rhythm.[38] Artists such as *The Winans*, Tramaine Hawkins, and Andre Crouch became known for their smooth ballads and groove-based songs that echoed mainstream artists by the likes of *Frankie Beverly and Maze*, Teena Marie and *Earth, Wind and Fire*. The primary role of the drummer during this era was to keep strict time and their virtuosity focused more on the feel behind the groove rather than the fills played in between the measures. Fred Dinkins stated, "there were 2 things: time and feel. That was the biggest thing to do."[39] Although their musical technique varied in application, drummers such as Dana Davis (*The Winans*, Vicki Winans), Fred Dinkins (Tramaine Hawkins), Bill Maxwell (Andre Crouch), and Michael Williams (*Commissioned*) led the momentum for creativity in gospel drumming.

The Late 1980s

By the end of the 1980s, a shift in the style and approach of gospel drumming occurred as musicians began to bring their virtuosic abilities to the forefront of recorded songs while showcasing their techniques for the gospel community. Artists began to grant musical liberties for expressions through drum introductions and fills which enhanced the songs. Drummers such as Chris Dave, Gerald Heyward and Jeff Davis helped to expand the fills and techniques being implemented in gospel music.

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[38] Ibid.

[39] Fred Dinkins interview with author, August 2014.

Through the music of Brooklyn based artist Hezekiah Walker, Jeff "Lo" Davis and Gerald Heyward introduced a different type of fill that incorporated strong, fast double strokes on the bass drum known as rolls. These sixteenth-note and sextuplet pattern fills required advanced techniques that were not commonly found in previous gospel music drumming. Gorden Campbell added:

> It was all about his foot and that was the first person I witnessed to ever do that and it changed my everything! I don't know how old I was, maybe 12 or 13, but from that day on I tried to do what he did. And that's where I first saw it… And that was the Brooklyn thing. He was the first person to really do it, and he was into Steve Gadd. Gerald just made it his own.[40]

The technological advancements of recorded music with cassettes, CDs, and VHS tapes helped to spread the influence of both spiritual and mainstream drummers to those within the gospel genre. Live concerts allowed musicians to venture away from the strict timing and placement of recorded music and these concerts were now being made available for listening and viewing on various mediums. Celebrated concerts such as The Legends of Gospel Concert in Los Angeles, California[41] allowed drummers like Joel Smith to deviate from their structured recordings and display new musical ideas and techniques. The 1989 *Buddy Rich Memorial Concert* in Los Angeles[42] featured Dave Weckl, Vinnie Colauita, and Steve Gadd who were, and are currently, three leading drummers of the era. The trio began with their individual solos and eventually

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[40] Gorden Campbell, interview with author, November 2014.

[41] *Legends of Gospel in Concert*, directed by David Leivick and Frederick Ritzenberg, (1986; Los Angeles, CA: Monterey Video, 2005), DVD.

[42] *Dave Weckl, Vinnie Colaiuta & Steve Gadd – Drum solo*, October 14, 1989, 9:02, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUF8aRodecM.

transitioned into "trading fours." This concept and style taken from jazz is a technique in which musicians consistently alternate brief solos of pre-set length (for trading fours, four bars; musicians may also trade twos, eights, and so forth). Trading fours usually occurs after each musician has had a chance to play a solo, and often involves alternating four-bar segments with the drummer.[43] Gadd displayed his approach to groove-based patterns and solos while Colaiuta and Weckl unleashed a fury of linear-based fills. Weckl included an extensive breakdown of his linear fill approach through his *Next Step* DVD[44] and the triplet based linear fills (right, left, kick) he displayed would later become a staple of performance in gospel drumming as techniques progress into the 21st Century.

The rudimental approach of gospel drummers began to transition from the simplistic playing of the early era to more syncopated patterns. Sixteenth and thirty-second note patterns replaced eighth note rhythms that many of the early drummers used. Players began to incorporate flams, buzz rolls, and other syncopated rhythms into their playing during the late 1980s. Calvin Rodgers said:

> The double paradiddle, that form of the 32nd note with the fills being some of the doubles on the kick drum and then eventually taking some of those 32nd notes and turning them into diddles in the left hand, making the left hand instead of just being singles. I eventually evolved into learning after watching Weckl and breaking down his licks. Everybody was playing a lot of the Swiss army triplet stuff and that's what was very popular at the time. Kevin Brunson was doing it a lot. There was a lot of that happening. And so nobody was really getting into playing stuff like the diddles or any form of it. The single, the double, the diddle-diddle, nobody was really playing that stuff. So when you started playing that and people started hearing it, they started to say, "Hold on, hold on, what? What are

[43] Scott DeVeaux, *The History of Jazz*, (Univeristy of Virginia, Spring 2014), web.

[44] *Dave Weckl: The Next Step*, directed by Glenn Mangel, (1989; Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Music, 1989), DVD.

you playing?" Those definitely were the licks that really made and shaped gospel drumming after a while.[45]

Dominant drummers of the late 1980s such as Ray Bady (*Thompson Community Singers*) Kevin Brunson (*Thompson Community Singers*), Chris Dave (Kathy Taylor), Joel Smith (Walter Hawkins), Michael Williams (*Commissioned*), Mario Winans (*The Winans)* helped to push the initiative of incorporating a change in drumming styles.

The Early 1990s

The idea of *New Traditionalist* artists gained momentum during the last decade of the 20th Century. Artists such as Hezekiah Walker and Kirk Franklin began to bridge the gap between slower, more traditional gospel music versus contemporary, mainstream and upbeat music. With these changes in music and the rise in youthful praise, the drumming behind these artists began to evolve. The use of the Brooklyn-inspired drum rolls in Hezekiah Walker's "Clean Inside" [46] and James Hall's "King of Glory"[47] became a characteristic of gospel drummers. Musicians such as Jeff "Lo" Davis, Gerald Heyward, Jeff Leslie and Jason Hendricks continued to perform the licks on recordings for the gospel community to hear. The use of drum fills as the introduction of musical selections began to expand in length and difficulty in songs such as "Now Are We" [48] from Marvin

[45] Calvin Rodgers in discussion with the author, May 2014.

[46] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *Live In Toronto*, (Verity Records, 1993), CD.

[47] James Hall, *King of Glory: Live in Montreal,* (Compendia Records, 1995), CD.

[48] Marvin Winans, *Marvin Winans Introducing Perfect Praise,* (EMI Distribution, 1992). CD.

Winans (Mario Winans, drummer) and James Hall's "King of Glory."[49] Gospel drumming of the early 1990s stood as prelude to the entrance of solos within gospel drumming. "Thank You Lord" from Walter Hawkins's *Love Alive IV*[50] album featured two, eight-count drum breaks (or short solos) by Joel Smith. This freedom of expression laid the foundation for drum solos to be included in future gospel compositions. The use of musical interludes and reprises allowed for musicians to transition from the accompanying role for the singers and establish themselves as virtuoso performers.

The Mid-Late 1990s

The most notable transition in gospel drumming began during the middle of the 1990s decade. The *New Traditionalist* movement was in full swing as artists created music that reached out to the younger generations. During this time, Hezekiah Walker recorded a live album on the campus of Morehouse College and Kirk Franklin released two albums that featured the young adult based gospel group, *God's Property*. Arguably, the most influential drummer of this era was Chris Dave. Although Dave began his career in gospel music, he was best known during this time as the drummer for critically acclaimed R&B group *Mint Condition*. Dave's feel and grooves with the *Mint Condition* band seemed to mirror those found in gospel music and inspired other drummers to implement them. Black Entertainment Television [BET®] showcased *Mint Condition* on

[49] James Hall, *King of Glory: Live in Montreal* (1995).

[50] Walter Hawkins, *Love Alive IV,* (Malaco Records, 1990). CD.

the live music show "Planet Groove" in the mid 1990s[51] and this performance featured rearranged music from their recorded albums. Dave's drumming was viewed by an abundance of gospel musicians who were not previously aware of his style. After the program aired, many gospel drummers began to mimic the approach to ballads, intricate fills and syncopation that Chris Dave displayed. Calvin Rodgers stated, "I don't care what anybody says, Chris Dave changed it. When that concert aired on Planet Groove, there wasn't a drummer that played the same, gospel music wise. There wasn't a drummer that played the same after that. Everybody changed after that. Everyone."[52]

At the same time Chris Dave was performing with *Mint Condition*, he was also an in-demand studio musician as he recorded gospel albums with Houston-based singer Kim Burrell. With a substantial background in jazz, Burrell brought a different compositional and musical approach to gospel music. As a high school student, Chris Dave was greatly influenced by legendary jazz drummer Tony Williams and Dave's experience in the genre made him a perfect fit for Burrell's particular style of music. Nate Robinson explained:

> After that, he played on Kim Burrell's first record and that record changed the landscape of gospel again. It was going more in the direction of a pop, R&B type thing. The grooves were different, the chordal approach was different, and that was an amazing album… Anybody that really knows will tell you that Chris Dave had a lot to do with the evolution of gospel drumming. Period.[53]

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[51] Chris Dave, Mint Condition, *Mint Condition Live! Chris Dave killin', Live performance from BET Planet Groove,* 9:54, Nov. 26, 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwtmVON_v7I.

[52] Calvin Rodgers interview with author, May 2014.

[53] Nate Robinson interview with author, November 2014.

Kim Burrell's musical compositions included instrumental interludes and reprises that integrated jazz, rock and fusion styles into gospel music and served as a platform for solo and progressive drum performances. The title track of her first album, *Try Me Again,*[54] featured a musical interlude in which Chris Dave used rudimental-based grooves; off beat drum patterns and rhythmic displacement or beat substitutions similar to the minimalistic composer Steve Reich.[55] Her second album *Everlasting Life*[56] contained a music reprise to the song "Prodigal Son" and two musical interludes, "Kim's Request" and "Tribute." The latter interlude featured a drum solo from Doobie Powell that displayed evolutionary linear fills and Brooklyn rolls.

The use of drum introductions and solos continued to grow in length, difficulty and expression during this era and artists remained active in creativity and musical innovation. LaDell Abrams performed a lengthy drum introduction to John P. Kee's *Strength*[57] album that served as the beginning to the live concert. Abrams is also known for his drum solo on "God of Mercy" from the album *Heaven*[58] by The Inner City Mass Choir. This solo, broken up into two sets of eight-measure phrases, served as one of the first virtuosic solos in gospel music. Drummers such as Jason Hendricks (Hezekiah

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[54] Kim Burrell, *Try Me Again*, (Shanachie Records, 1997), CD.

[55] J. Colannino, F. Gomez and G.T. Toussaint, Analysis of emergent beat class sets in Steve Reich's *Clapping Music* and the *Yoruba* bell timeline, *Perspective of New Music, (*2009): 113.

[56] Kim Burrell, *Everlasting Life*, (Tommy Boy Records, 1998). CD.

[57] John P. Kee, *Strength,* (Verity Records, 1998). CD.

[58] Inner City Mass Choir, *Heaven*, (Tyscot Records, 1996), CD.

Walker/"I'll Be Satisfied")[59] Sheryl Harper (Joe Pace and the Colorado Mass Choir/"Stir up the Gift")[60] and Marvin McQuitty (Fred Hammond and RFC/"Glory to Glory")[61] all helped to raise the level of performance within drum introductions.

Through the end of the decade, drummers within the gospel industry began to rise in prominence and influence just as quickly as the artists with whom they performed. Influential solo performances, strong pocket grooves, and aggressive drumming in the expansion of rhythmic variations, musicians such as Teddy Campbell (*Chicago Mass Choir*), LaDell Abrams (John P. Kee), Doobie Powell (Kim Burrell), Robert "Sput" Searight (*God's Property*), Calvin Napper (John P. Kee, Donald Lawrence, Karen Clark-Sheard,) Jeremy Haynes (Donald Lawrence, Twinkie Clark, *Men of Standard*) and many others propelled the style of contemporary gospel drumming into the 21st century.

The Early 2000s

The turn of the 21st century brought an evolution in many areas of music and the young pupils of the 1980s era began to make their mark on the gospel drumming community. Musicians who grew up with the gospel drumming influence of previous decades along with the influx of instructional and performance videos were now honing their skills and allowing their musical voices to be heard. Not only were the young musicians of the day inspired by the previous generations, but they could also view

[59] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *Live in New York: By Any Means Necessary*, (Verity Records, 1995), CD.

[60] Joe Pace and the Colorado Mass Choir, *Watch God Move,* (Zomba Records, 1997), CD.

[61] Fred Hammond, *Pages of Life: Chapters 1&2,* (Verity Records, 1998), CD.

performers of their own age displaying advanced techniques and skill such as the drumming prodigy Tony Royster Jr. in his *Common Ground*[62] video at the age of 15.

The first, and arguably the most, influential gospel drummer of the 21st century was Calvin Rodgers. During the early years of the decade, Rodgers gained notoriety as he recorded numerous albums that featured progressive drumming. The first instance of this type of drumming occurred on the 2001 album release of Bishop Larry Trotter entitled *Tell the Devil I'm Back.*[63] The entire album contained aggressive drumming from Rodgers, but it was the title track that featured numerous drum breaks and highly syncopated fills during the vamp and reprise. The 12/8-meter of the song was advantageous to Rodgers' love of the paradiddle-diddle rudiment[64] and allowed for him to bring the use of such rudiments into solo performances. Rodgers mentioned:

> Eventually I learned the paradiddle-diddle, which was probably, well, that's just my favorite accent. It's just so many ways to be played. I like the ins and outs of it and I like how you can play it over and over. If you learn it and master it, you can play it in any time signature… So those were the ones that I can definitely point to. Those were the one's that fit into gospel music. They were the ones, when I played them, people noticed and they sounded different from what everybody else was playing.[65]

In 2001, Rodgers recorded possibly the most notable drum solo in gospel drumming history during "Rain on Us" from John P. Kee's *Not Guilty…The Experience*

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[62] *Dennis Chambers/Billy Cobham/Tony Royster, Jr.: Common Ground Inspiration*, directed by Derek Fremd (1999, Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Music, 1999), VHS.

[63] Bishop Larry Trotter and the Sweet Holy Spirit Combined Choirs, *Tell the Devil I' Back*, (Tyscot Records, 2001), CD.

[64] Essential drum pattern performed in the sequence: right, left, right, right, left, left.

[65] Calvin Rodgers in discussion with the author, May 2014.

album.[66] Although LaDell Abrams recorded the original "God of Mercy" in 1996 with the Inner City Mass Choir, Kee remixed the song as "Rain on Us" in 2001 and allowed Rodgers to infuse the track with his playing style. This recording showcased an evolution of Abrams' previous solo by including similar voicings from the 1996 recording. Most importantly, the Rodgers rendition integrated linear fills introduced in the 1990s, go-go dance rhythms, and off-beat placement patterns that were not common in gospel drumming.

The early 2000s presented highly advanced drum solos performances from Robert "Sput" Searight (Kim Burrell/"I'll Keep Holding on"),[67] Chris Coleman (Israel Houghton and New Breed/"Minstrel's Advance"),[68] Aaron Spears (Gideon Band/"Praise Him")[69] and Calvin Napper (Micah Stampley/"War Cry").[70] Future drummers were motivated to adopt these styles and incorporate them into their own drumming. For example, the use and evolution of the Brooklyn inspired fill could be found in numerous performances such as those by Jeffrey Lesley (Hezekiah Walker/"I'll Make It")[71] and Calvin Rodgers (Fred Hammond/"This is the Day").[72]

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[66] John P. Kee and the New Life Community Choir, *Not Guilty…The Experience,* (Verity Records, 2000), CD.

[67] Kim Burrell, *Live in Concert,* (Elektra Records, 2001), CD.

[68] Israel Houghton and New Breed, *Live from Another Level*, (Sony Studios, 2004), DVD.

[69] Gideon Band, *The Experience,* (Gideon Band, LLC, 2000), CD.

[70] Micah Stampley, *The Songbook of Micah*, (EMI Gospel, 2005), CD.

[71] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *Family Affair Vol. 2 - Live At Radio City Music Hall*, (Verity Records, 2002), CD.

[72] Fred Hammond, *Free to Worship,* (Verity Records, 2006), CD.

Gospel Chops

Jam and friendly shed sessions have long been a part of the gospel drumming culture. Drummers, who gathered at a church with multiple drum sets to exchange ideas, were being recorded with new smartphones and video devices of the era. With the growing popularity of the video site YouTube®, shed sessions were being uploaded daily. The popularity of the drumming culture led to coining of the phrase "gospel chops" and the creation of the website Gospelchops.com in 2005. Chris Coleman, however, stated that gospel chops is just a title to something someone saw and did not understand exactly what it was.

> Growing up in the church, we as drummers used to get together regularly. For most of us, it was inner city. It kept us out of gangs, kept us off the streets, and kept us out of drugs. Our parents would ask, "Where are you going? Oh, you're going to church? Please go! Take your drums and stay as long as you want. At least I'll know where you are." So for us it was nothing to put 4-5 drums in the middle of church. The Pastor would get through preaching, take up offering, end church and then we'd start bringing in drums. We'd start at 10pm and sometimes we'd go until 9 in the morning. We'd look up like "Oh, it's 9 o'clock. I gotta go to work!" We would go all night but it kept us safe. We would call our friends, figure out who's in town and people would drive all the way from Detroit to Saginaw and Flint. The next thing you know, it's about 80 people in the church, it's all young people, all musicians and everybody is shedding. That's what we did. We pushed each other but it was more like a brotherhood, a fellowship, and it meant something to us. Then everyone started videotaping, it finally made it to YouTube but then there were people who had never seen anything like this. They thought "Oh, what is this? That's a church. Oh my God, it's those gospel guys. It's a bunch of chops…I guess it's gospel chops!"[73]

Gerald Forrest created the website GospelChops.com in an effort to showcase the genre of gospel music. Forrest further stated, "I built the website based on free gospel

[73] Chris Coleman, gospel chops clinic, accessed October 10, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-77RZ53nzA4.

music education content. I wanted the world to have access to this creative culture that is often hidden within the confines of the church sanctuary."[74] The website assisted with the influx of gospel drumming being made available for mass viewing outside of the traditional music recordings, but the spirit of gospel drumming and shedding has been around for quite sometime.

The Late 2000s and Beyond

As the style of gospel music continued to advance, the techniques of gospel drumming followed suit and continued to progress in ability. Tye Tribbett sustained the trend of *New Traditionalist* artists by creating a style of gospel music that included choreographed dance moves from the background singers. George "Spanky" McCurdy, the drummer for Tribbett's first three albums (*Life*, *Victory Live!,* and *Stand Out)*[75] brought a different approach to gospel drumming with his Philadelphia influence from Lil' Jon Roberts and Brian Frasier Moore. The placement of his fills in space, ghost notes, and off-beat patterns created different effects within the music. Drumming introductions continued to expand in length and virtuosity from drummers such as McCurdy (Tye Tribbett, James Fortune), Mike Reid (Jonathan Nelson), Robert Searight (Kirk Franklin, Myron Butler) and Calvin Rodgers (Fred Hammond, Marvin Sapp).

[74] About, *www.gospelchops.com,* http://www.gospelchops.com/?page_id=12.

[75] Tye Tribbett & G.A, *Life* (2004); *Victory Live!* (2008); *Stand Out,* (Sony Music Entertainment, 2008), CD.

Rodgers truly left his mark on the gospel drumming industry with his aggressive drumming on the Marvin Sapp albums of the late 2000s (*Thirsty, Here I Am, I Win*).[76] His rudimental (paradiddle-diddle) and linear based fills helped to inspire a generation of drummers and define the true meaning of gospel chops: virtuosity of drumming within gospel music. The performance from Rodgers at the end of "More Than a Conqueror"[77] served as the apex for gospel drumming of the early 21st century as his skill and dexterity captured the essence of the musical style. The drum introduction and solo on James Fortune's "Never Again" by Rodgers could function as the quintessential definition of gospel drumming in this decade: Blazing speed, linear fills and impeccable placement.

Shout Music

A common characteristic found in the black church is the style of preaching known as *kratophany,* and the music that accompanies this style of preaching is known as shout music. Much of the shout music in earlier decades was recorded by chance on various albums. Hezekiah Walker and Kirk Franklin both recorded live albums where the audience became filled with emotion and began to praise God with impromptu shout music. In the late 2000s, artists such as Tye Tribbett and Byron Cage began to compose full songs around the shout music style. George "Spanky" McCurdy's drumming on "I Still Have Joy" and "I Made It Through" transformed the drumming of shout music as he incorporated varied grooves, ghost notes and open handed playing. In 2009, Calvin Rodgers' displayed an evolutionary approach to shout music with his performance on

[76] Marvin Sapp, *Thirsty* (2007); *Here I Am* (2010); *I Win*, (Verity Records, 2012*),* CD.

[77] Marvin Sapp, *Here I Am*, (2010).

Byron Cage's "I Can't Hold It."[78] The groove Rodgers performed included three different variations, and also a pattern inspired by the fusion and pop drummer Keith Carlock.

Chapter Summary

Gospel drummers of this era brought various approaches to the genre but each player demonstrated characteristics of a strong pocket, precise fills, placement, and expanded linear fills with an increase in speed. Drummers such as Terry Baker (Kirk Franklin), Mike Clemons (Israel and New Breed, Deon Kipping, Issac Carree), Calvin Rodgers (Fred Hammond, Marvin Sapp, James Fortune), Brent Easton (J. Moss, Ricky Dillard), Tavarius Johnson (Donald Lawrence, Fred Hammond, James Fortune), Robert "Sput" Searight (Kirk Franklin), Larrone McMillian (Doobie Powell), Rodney Dorsey (James Fortune), George "Spanky" McCurdy (Tye Tribbett, James Fortune) and Michael Reid (Rodnie Bryant, Donnie McClurkin, James Fortune, Jonathan Nelson) are some of the pioneering performers who ushered in the new era of contemporary gospel drumming. With their skill and virtuosity on display to educate others, the drumming community has come to recognize and respect gospel drummers in this particular style of performance.

[78] Byron Cage, *Faithful to Believe,* (GospoCentric Records, 2009). CD.

CHAPTER III

INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the information collected through the formative experiences of various leading gospel drumming artists and uncover their perspective on the evolution of the performance style. Personal interviews were conducted via phone, Skype®, and FaceTime® with the interviewees. A supplementary interview was derived from two additional mediums to enhance the personal findings. The study is guided by the previous research questions mentioned in Chapter I. This chapter presents findings from the interviews and includes excerpts demonstrating the experiences and opinions of each participant. All of the data included in the chapter assists in the identification of information pertinent to the evolution of gospel drumming.

Participants

The selection for participation in the interview process was quite extensive. The identification of potential interviewees was based on knowledge of gospel drumming, experience with both gospel and mainstream artists, recognition within the gospel, and mainstream drumming community. It was also the intent to gather information from various geographical regions and religious denominations. Several artists were contacted, but ultimately the inclusion of additional artists was limited by availability. The artists who participated in the personal interviews were: Calvin Rodgers, Fred Dinkins, Gorden

Campbell, Nate Robinson and Aaron Henry. Data for Jeff Davis were collected from the Gospel and R&B Drumming DVD[79] released by Hudson Music and through a Modern Drummer interview conducted by Stephen Styles.[80]

Questioning Results

How did you get your start in drumming?

Each of the participants stated that they began their drumming careers at a very early age by playing in the church. Nate Robinson stated:

> I was attracted to the instrument when I was super young, maybe 2 or 3 years old and I would just watch the dudes playing at church. That's how I got started. I would get in trouble every Sunday because my mama would say "We have to leave and go somewhere after church so don't go over there to the drums." I would answer, "yes ma'am" but as soon as church was over, I'd run straight to the drums and get in trouble.

Fred Dinkins added:

> I started playing at an early age. My mom told me I was beating on pots and pans from birth. Going to church, they finally allowed a drummer to come in and play. When I was a kid, the pastor's name was Rev. Mitchell and his son was a good friend with Donny Hathaway. He would bring in different bands, they would play, but I wasn't old enough and I didn't have a drum set yet. I had some fake bongos, the small drums with the pins and nails on the side. I would sit on the front bench and play with the drummer. I finally got a drum set for $75 out of a pawnshop. I remember my brother taking me on the bus to go pay on the drums. If I had a dime, I would go pay on the drums and I finally got the drums out.

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[79] *Gospel and R&B Drumming*, hosted by Jeff Davis (2011; Briarcliff, NY: Hudson Music, 2013), DVD.

[80] Stephen Styles, "Jeff Davis," *Modern Drummer* 34, no. 10 (October 2010): 35-38, accessed May 27, 2014, http://search.proquest.com/docview/821026030?accountid=12711.

All of the participants grew up in different locations across the United States and gained experience through regional influence. The growth in their performance habits took place during traditional church services, concerts, conventions and musicals during their youth. Gorden Campbell, a native of Newburgh, New York, discussed how the Church of God In Christ [COGIC] community helped to hone his drumming skills. Campbell stated:

> We all grew up in COGIC so going to conventions is where I met everyone. We were probably 12 or 13 and we were already hanging around the drum set… We were playing with a choir, with an audience, and with a band that you had to learn how to play with. That's where I got my start. Then I began playing with a group called "Shining Light" which was a group in upstate New York. I was in high school and we would open up at convention for artists like BeBe and CeCe [Winans], Take 6 and whoever came up to that area. That's when I first started playing with a monitor and getting backline equipment. Some of the gospel artists that I played with over the years, the chance came from being in a house band.

Calvin Rodgers, a Chicago native added, "I grew up in Chicago, which is a staple of gospel music, so as a kid, from the time I was like 8 or 9 years old, I had direct, personal access to a lot of guys who were a part of making gospel music so trendy." Jeff Davis disclosed how the environment existed for early gospel drumming in traditional denominations. Davis revealed:

> When I was coming up, I was one of the first guys in the metropolitan area to bring drums into a lot of the churches. I grew up in Jersey City and there were no drums in churches really. I started to do choir anniversaries and you'd bring the drums in and the older ladies would say "Are you gonna beat those drums loud?" and I took that personally. So I always played to accompany and never to make noise because I learned from going to my grandmother's Baptist church. The ladies asked "Is he gonna make a lot of noise?" She would answer, 'that's my grandson and he's not gonna make noise" and I always carried that with me.

Who were your influences inside of gospel drumming?

Joel Smith and Bill Maxwell were two names that many of the participants mentioned as their biggest influence in gospel drumming. Joel Smith's drumming with the Hawkins Family served as a foundation for gospel drumming to the younger musicians. Rodgers strongly identified aspects of Smith's playing that inspired him. Rodgers stated:

> I have the same emotion every time I listen at that song because Joel Smith completely just…I mean the way he played that track, drums were not being played like that. Everything he was playing on that track is just unbelievable. That changed everything about drums to me. Everything I'd heard on drums before then made me want to mimic it. That song made me want to create drum music like that. I wanted to play drums in a way that it would completely captivate the person that was hearing it. I didn't want to play for people, I didn't want to play for show, but I wanted to pull on that emotion that had been pulled on for me when I heard that song. When I heard those drums, it just completely arrested me, and I'm like "This is the way I want to play drums." Not these kind of chops, not this particular lick, but this passion and this emotion that I'm hearing from this guy's drumming is how I have to play drums.

Bill Maxwell's approach to drumming was from a supportive standpoint and heightened the idea of playing for the music. The notion of "staying in the pocket" is a common reference to the playing style of Maxwell. When asked about Maxwell's immediate influence, Fred Dinkins said, "After listening to Bill I learned the importance of being a solid drummer. Keeping the pulse and knowing the music was obvious when listening to Bill. I learned to texture the music better playing the subtle places with a better dynamic touch especially on ballads. I also developed my sound better."

Maxwell also served as a pioneer to those who were knowledgeable to the production side of the industry as he was one of the first drummers to receive credit as a music producer. Jeff Davis reported:

> And then, there was Bill Maxwell who played with Andre Crouch. Bill Maxwell was my hero because Bill played drums but then he was the engineer on all the sessions and he co-produced all of the records with Andre. Now Bill is doing TV shows, he's done the music to "Martin," and all of these other TV series so he keeps reinventing himself.

Calvin Rodgers added:

> I remember listening to an Andre Crouch record, and my dad telling me about Bill Maxwell. He's another drummer who was very influential in gospel music, but Bill Maxwell was from another place. When I started looking at him, I started being confused because I would start seeing his name on the albums as a drummer and a producer. I thought, "How does that work, what does that mean and how does he do that?" I'll admit and I hate to say it, as a youngster, I wasn't as attracted to Bill Maxwell's playing as I was to Joel Smith. Bill Maxwell was a producer and as I got older I grew to appreciate it, but his playing didn't grab me as Joel's did immediately. Bill Maxwell was a producer, he was a songwriter, and he was all about tone. He was all about the song, and he was all about time.

Each of the participants stated that local musicians who were not a part of the larger gospel scene influenced a vast majority of their style. Jeff Davis said, "Two of my heroes in New York are Derrick Scofield and a guy named Edgar Meeks. You'll never hear about them and they were incredible drummers." Aaron Henry mentioned:

> Inside of gospel music, the influences were Joel Smith who played for the Hawkins. Robert Searight, everyone knows him from God's Property and a lot of other artists. Peebody, which his real name is Lawrence Ferrell, I watched his playing a lot growing up. These were guys from around the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

Jeff Davis gave reference to the regional influence gained from various Christian denominations. Davis dissected the regions as such:

> You have a major city breakdown of gospel entities or gospel churches. You have St. Louis who breeds phenomenal gospel drummers, Detroit, and Chicago. You have Oakland, California and the San Francisco area, which I attribute to the Tower of Power days, Grand Central Station and of course L.A. Then you have a plethora of guys in Texas, both Houston and Dallas… Shout out to Chris Dave, who's the other color guy [adding tones and sounds to the instrument] that just changed some things, and he comes from the gospel ranks as well. Then over to New Orleans, and there's some traditional guys in Mississippi, Atlanta, with another traditional realm in Miami, up to Orlando and Jackson. That's another style. Charlotte, Virginia and North Carolina somewhat mix in together. Washington and Baltimore, which was the go-go era, then you have Philly, which was the soul thing, and then you come into New York. New York, New Jersey and Connecticut are bunched together. Now, when you take all of these areas, they all have different styles and sounds even just in churches. How they play their music, how it flows and how their service goes, they are all different. I was blessed to visit all of those [areas] in the 80s because of traveling with different gospel artists. I was able to meet a lot of the earlier heroes. If you go to Detroit, you would hear about a guy named Dana Davis, Michael Williams, and Joseph Joe. There were guys like Ray Bady and other guys in Chicago. The list goes on and on. I'm trying to do a breakdown of the different regions and name the heroes from the 60s on to the present.

Who were your influences outside of gospel drumming?

Jazz drummers were at the top of the list for many of the participants. In particular, one participant noted that although he grew up in church, gospel was not his primary influence. Nate Robinson stated:

> To be honest, the weird thing about it is that I never really liked gospel at all even though I grew up in church. The dudes playing there were solid and good players, so I picked up to what they were doing but I didn't like the music much. So I never really got into any drummers that were really playing gospel. That's weird because I was learning in church but I was really more attracted to other styles of music. The first record I got that really blew my mind was the *Mo' Betta Blues*

> soundtrack and all of that was Jeff "Tain" Watts. The jazz drummers blew me away more so than the dudes that were playing the gospel stuff.

Names that were continuously mentioned with regard to influence outside of gospel music were drummers such as Dave Weckl, Vinnie Colaiuta, Steve Gadd, Will Kennedy, Dennis Chambers, Alphonse Mouzon, Ricky Lawson, and Jeff Porcaro.

What were some of the first solos you heard?

When asked about drum solos, Buddy Rich was the performer most often mentioned by the participants. Rich's performances on the Late Show with Johnny Carson were viewed by those who were allowed to stay up and watch. Dinkins mentioned:

> I also liked Buddy Rich. My mom would let me stay up and watch "The Late Show with Johnny Carson" because Buddy Rich played on there all of the time… My mom would let me watch and the only prerequisite was that I needed to be up in time for church the next morning. I was a PK [Preacher's Kid] so I couldn't have any problems with my Dad and he was cool with that.

Various other drum solos were heard from jazz players such as Billy Cobham, Tony Williams, and Elvin Jones. These are the solos that helped change the musical approach of the participants. Nate Robinsons said:

> One of the first solos that just really messed me up was…well, there's a couple. One was on John Coltrane' *A Love Supreme.* The way the album is written, the way it is made out, one of the movements starts with a solo. Elvin Jones just destroys it. And that opened my eyes to a certain approach to soloing. A really musical approach, the phrasing, you can really hear him saying something. As opposed to dudes now who just play a bunch of licks. Of course I'd heard solos

> before then but that was one of the first performances that made me think about the approach.

Chris Dave

Chris Dave began his career as a musical prodigy in the Houston area and quickly acquired mainstream success. Dave served as an influence in genres of gospel, jazz, hip-hop and R&B. Each of the participants pinpointed Dave as a source for inspiration and a performer who played a major impact on the evolution of contemporary gospel drumming. Nate Robinson, who grew up in the Houston area alongside Dave, gave a personal account of his influence:

> A big influence was Chris Dave and that's because we grew up 10 minutes apart from each other. He's a couple of years older than me, I'd always bump into him during school competitions, or little church functions and he was a prodigy. He was 12 and I was 9 or 10, and he was playing circles around the grown ups. At that age, his playing was phenomenal, but he saw where he could go with it. He was a big influence in that way.

Robinson also mentioned:

> Then Chris [Dave] came along and in a big way, and I'm sure there were other people across the country, but in a big way he spurred the evolution of how people changed their playing. I'm not sure if you're familiar with Kathy Taylor, …Chris recorded on one of her albums; this had to be around '85 or '86 because I was very young. The song called "Joy Cometh in the Morning" started with quartet singing and Chris playing the groove for the first stanza of the song before the rest of the band came in. He played a little lick before the end of the stanza right before the band came in and nobody had ever heard that kind of approach and he had to record the album when he was 11 or 12 years old. Then, especially around Houston, everyone began to change their approach because he was just killing it. He was truly a young protégé. After that, he played on Kim Burrell's first record and that record changed the landscape of gospel again. It was going more in the direction of a pop, R&B type thing. The grooves were different, the

> chordal approach was different, and that was an amazing album. I think I had a cool little front row seat because I got to watch all of that stuff as it was happening. Anybody that really knows will tell you that Chris Dave had a lot to do with the evolution of gospel drumming. Period.

The shift in gospel music began to mirror that of mainstream artists and Dave's playing was a perfect marriage between the two. Calvin Rodgers referenced one particular event:

> In the early 1990s, maybe 1992 or 1993, Chris Dave bursts on the scene. *Mint Condition* comes out. Everybody was cool on *Mint Condition* but again, not many gospel guys were hearing them live. We knew them from the radio, "You Send Me Swingin'," "Pretty Brown Eyes," but there was another side of *Mint Condition* that you caught when you went to see them live. And it wasn't until their performance on BET-Planet Groove that the world got to see. We didn't know!... He completely changed gospel music… And he completely changes the way everybody played gospel music. I don't care what anybody says, Chris Dave changed it. When that concert aired on Planet Groove, there wasn't a drummer that played the same, gospel music wise. There wasn't a drummer that played the same after that. Everybody changed after that. Everyone.

Brooklyn Fills

When asked about specific fills in gospel music that assisted in their playing, a common reference led to Gerald Heyward and Jeff Davis from the Brooklyn area. The fast double strokes on the foot, followed with syncopated rhythms from the toms and snare led to create a characteristic sound that is now associated with gospel drumming. When asked about the origin of the fill, Gorden Campbell gave his personal claim:

> The first person I saw do all of that was Gerald. He played at this church called Institutional COGIC. That church is where Hezekiah [Walker] came from. James Hall, Butch Heyward, Melvin Crispell, and a lot of other people all came from that church. Back then Gerald wasn't even playing drums. He played the congas

as the percussionist, but once he started playing drums he became that child prodigy. Institutional COGIC came to my church once, and my cousin who was with me from Brooklyn said, "If they start shouting, watch what he plays." Of course, in the service they started shouting and he was playing doubles the whole time. It was all about his foot and that was the first person I witnessed to ever do that and it changed my everything! I don't know how old I was, maybe 12 or 13, but from that day on I tried to do what he did. And that's where I first saw it. Now, the first record that I can remember it being on is a song called "Higher Ground" by Timothy Wright with Gerald playing. I used to show it in my clinics because I have the actual album. Gerald does these rolls at the end during the vamp and it's those doubles. I tell a lot of young people, if you know your history, you'll know who the first person was to do something. Joel Smith was doing it way back in the day but Gerald had this thing on it. And that was the Brooklyn thing. He was the first person to really do it, and he was into Steve Gadd. Gerald just made it his own.

Calvin Rodgers mentioned:

Yeah, all of the Gerald Heyward stuff! Especially from back when he was with Hezekiah Walker and James Hall… I remember hearing that and going, "First of all who takes this long on a fill? Who plays a fill this long? That's a long fill! Who plays doubles back to back like that?" I was blown away. That's a fill that I took which is basically some form of doubles or 32nd notes broken up. That fill and learning to play it different ways was one fill that definitely helped me just even to establish that I was a drummer that people wanted to listen to. If you couldn't play that stuff, no one listened. This was how you got people's attention. When someone played that fill, you stopped and thought, "Hold on. Wait a minute. Let me pay attention to what he's doing."

How has gospel drumming evolved?

Evolution is inevitable but the observance of this evolution varies from person to person. Over the last 50 years, gospel drumming has expanded in technical application and rudimental implementation. Jeff Davis said:

It's a lot of stuff we've learned because of the ebb and flow or vibe of the music. It wasn't technically taught but it was I guess emotionally brought. We kind of

> got it that way. Then we found out in the full circle of things that there was a technical aspect that you needed to your application to be exact, to some was an insult. For some of the older guys, they didn't and wouldn't change.

When speaking of the earlier era, Calvin Rodgers stated:

> I think from the late 1970s to early 1980s, it was all about the Swiss army triplets. Everybody was doing that. Then you had Joel Smith coming with all of the syncopation in his playing. Joel Smith was incorporating the buzz roll into a lot of his chops. Not only were we hearing the syncopation in the left hand with him, but also he was breaking up his accents and his beats…When he started bringing that stuff out, we were all just kinda like WOW! All of that was mid to late 80s.

When asked about the evolution, each participant responded with comments affirming the pros and cons of gospel drumming. Although the technical ability of the performers has risen, there are major issues with their musical interpretation. Beginning in the early 1980s, Nate Robinson reported:

> Between the age of 8 to 18, there was a big change in drumming. I was born in 1977 so I'm right on the cusp of the old school and the new school. When I first started paying attention to drums, literally, you could tell that most drummers didn't have any kind of education. They weren't playing any kind of rudiments and that kind of stuff, or gospel drummers that is. I wasn't really aware at that point of the whole jazz drumming thing. Those were the dudes who were educated and really had skill behind what they were playing. Gospel drumming? The younger guys? Their technique was bad, it was nothing but sixteenth note licks around the drums [sings pattern], and that was all I ever heard, everywhere you went.

As the 1990s ushered in new techniques, drummers began to become more assertive with the implementation of drum fills. Aaron Henry stated:

> It's evolved in a major way. I think when you say gospel music, it's pretty much everything. Blues, Rock, Hip-hop, R&B and Pop, everything is put into gospel music as a whole. And the drummers are playing exactly what the music calls for. As far as the way it has advanced, I think that drummers now are extremely aggressive. Back then drummers played but things began to change around the 90s or so with all of the licks. I think drummers now can sometimes be over aggressive instead of playing the music. That's another way that it's evolving. There are a lot of changes going into R&B and gospel so drummers are being more aggressive in the open spaces and taking more liberties with their fills. I think the way the music has changed has evolved the drummers to become more aggressive.

Gorden Campbell asserted:

> I think it's incredible because the cats can really play. The dexterity and technique that guys have, even if they don't know what its called, if it's a paradiddle or a ratamacue, they don't know. It's just a culture of us playing like that. I love that aspect of it. The part that I don't necessarily like is a lot of times nobody is teaching the cats how to hone that in, make it disciplined and make music out of it. The way gospel chops is viewed now is like a sport.

Campbell also gave a great analogy of gospel drumming as it relates to sports:

> It's like And1 [freestyle basketball] as opposed to the NBA. The And1 dudes are crazy and we love watching it, but I'd rather be in the NBA… I can still do all of that, but I'll do it when I'm at the park. But when it's time to work, make a living and make a career, I'd rather be in the NBA. You see the And1 thing didn't last that long. They were on TV for a while, it was dope for a few seasons, a couple of guys made a name for themselves and all of that, but it ended. The NBA has been here for years, you know? And it's not leaving.

The lack of music education for today's young gospel drummer was a common theme in the responses gained from the participants. Calvin Rodgers stated:

> Well, I think the level of artistry has always been high. I mean, some people are going to dislike what I'm saying but let's just put it out there. Gospel musicians

> are the best musicians in the world. I'm just going say it. Some are going to agree and some are not going to agree. This is my personal opinion. Gospel musicians are the best in the world. And the reason why we're getting better is…. Well, it's a double edge sword. Musicians are coming out younger and they're coming out better… The reason why a lot of us don't succeed is because we get in our own way. We don't become skilled. We don't become professionals. We think that the talent is just enough and it's not. The gig is just not enough. Being able to play is not just good enough you know? I think that's what happens and it's why so many of us don't get major gigs.

Although there may be an absence of standardized education, Nate Robinson argued that the talents of the gospel drummer should be admired:

> [Having attended college] It's a huge factor but let's not get it twisted. There are some dudes who have never sat in a classroom that can play circles around me. I'm definitely not putting anyone down like that for a lack of education, but in my case, it's huge. At the end of the day, it's learning a certain level of discipline and it's learning the nuances. The little, tiny details about how you can approach things and ideas. Little things like dynamics. That's one of the things that I'm really critical about when it comes to a lot of gospel drummers. I hear dudes that play phenomenal stuff, and let me make sure I make that clear. I'm not saying they can't play because these dudes can play you under the table. But a lot of my problem is, my ears get fatigued when I'm listening to it because there's no use of dynamics, and everything is loud. That's something that my education has afforded me is to be able to clean things up by playing with more control and not playing so loud. I understand what an unaccented note is and those little bits make your drumming grow exponentially. I think its really understanding approach. Being able to create your own approach and define your own approach. I learned that from having good teachers.

The priority of the drummer should be to provide the groove and support for the song, but Fred Dinkins gave an account how some of today's gospel drummers have refocused their way of thinking. Dinkins explained:

> Well, there is both good and bad but I don't want to sound negative… I wanted to play and support the singing that I was playing to. If I got the chance to open up,

then I would put something in there. Today, a problem that I hear with a lot of the gospel stuff is that they hear differently. I teach guys and I'm quite sure you do to. I show them something and they come back with a whole different vocabulary of something new and I think, "Where did that come from? I didn't show you that." And they argue that I did. But how did they hear what they just played from what I showed them and they can't explain it. The music is great, the chops are great but the problem is the spirituality. There is a certain place, to me, where the groove sits and makes that music feel great. I think with the evolution, a lot of times everybody plays on top [of the beat]. Everybody has to have the energy to play the stuff that comes along with the new music. I hear now where everyone doesn't sit in the groove and that groove should be the first priority.

Gorden Campbell mentioned:

The thing for me is, I love the chops and I love being able to do it. Honestly, if you compare us gospel guys to a lot of the rock guys, or even the jazz guys, we have more chops than all of them. Not that we're in a competition or anything but technically, it's so advanced. Even as a little kid. I have little kids that can play circles around a bunch of these professional drummers that's been playing for years. The only problem, nobody is sitting them down, making them play music, honing those chops into making something musical and not just a sport. You can't look like you're about to break a cymbal. You should be comfortable and it should be musical.

Due to the perceived lack of musical preparation, gospel drummers have received slightly negative attention in the drumming community. Calvin Rodgers mentioned:

I think for a period of time gospel drumming got a bad wrap. I remember one particular year, they had a gospel chops thing at NAMM [National Association of Music Merchants] and everybody was just giving them a hard time. They had this group of guys walking around with video cameras and everywhere they went, they'd go up to a booth, sit down and just blaze. It was just raw abandonment. It was untapped talent. It was talent that no one tapped into yet and no one has shown us how to use it and utilize it correctly. Like I said earlier, you can go type in gospel drummer and find a guy that plays in church and he can really play but he doesn't know what it takes. In a professional setting, he'd probably fall apart because he's not used to a controlled atmosphere. … I believe that gospel drumming has put a sour taste in some people's mouth because we may come off

> as just being arrogant who have no control with just a bunch of talent, and that's not true. I think sometimes it comes off as we're a bunch of guys with talent and we don't know what to do with it. We're just going around looking for drum sets that nobody is sitting on and we just want to get on and show everybody that we can out chop them and that's not the case for all gospel drummers. That's not the case.

Jeff Davis added:

> There are so many guys that need the information so they can grow. For a long time, there was no information for gospel guys so they migrated to whatever they liked. They may listen to what rock guys are doing, jazz or R&B, and lent themselves to that but they really didn't identify with it because they were church guys. So now, with the popularity of the church guys coming on, you have this hype and misinformation. It's destroying the opportunities because many of the players don't have the integrity to hold down a gig and that's bad. I've been privy to a lot of bad stories of guys having opportunities and losing them because of what they thought. I think there's than to get this information out so guys will know.

What are the demands placed on the current drummer?

With the growth in application and composition, the technical demands have risen for the contemporary gospel drummer. The biggest requests were to aide in creation and assist with production. Calvin Rodgers stated:

> We're in the age now where people are finally open to the creativity, the thoughts and ideas coming from the drummer. Now, more than ever, playing the drums just isn't good enough. People want to know if you have something else in you. They want to know if you can be creative with the music. They want to hear you give some opinions about how it should feel. They want you to create and they want your influence on the music… The demands that are put on us can vary from gig to gig. Sometimes they're going to want us to be programmers. Sometimes they're going to want us to be music directors and arrangers. Sometimes they're going to want us to create, they'll want our influence. They want whatever ideas we have.

From a performance standpoint, musical concerts are being arranged to fit the characteristic style of gospel drumming. The aggressive features associated with gospel drumming are now being implemented into the production of musical events. Fred Dinkins revealed:

> It's weird because some people still have the traditional thing, but then some have this idea of the drummers being gladiators. Like the show "American Gladiators." I saw a thing about Beyoncé and they were doing her lighting. She was saying that she needed the lights to do a certain thing, and the producers said it would look bad with all of the lights flashing all over the place. Beyoncé answered, "Oh no its not because its going to be on a time, the drummer is going to playing with a click to that tempo and will be chopping it up." I thought wow. I sat in on an audition with Randy Jackson not too long ago. The drummer played the tracks down, and Randy asked the drummer to open up. He picks a Jay-Z tune, the drummer played and I was blown away. So it's being asked of drummers now to be able to have the facility to do the things that are asked of you.

With the advancements in technology, drummers now are required to incorporate electronics into their playing. Synthetic sounds and equipment are becoming common necessities along side their acoustic drum sets. Gorden Campbell stated:

> I would go back maybe 20 years ago. The number one demand that I can think of is playing with the click [metronome]. Back in the day, there was no machine and you had to just play live. If you listen to the older records, the tempos are all over the place. Listen to any Herbie [Hancock] with Harvey Mason playing and any of the *Earth, Wind and Fire* records. If you listen to the beginning and skip to the end, it may be 3 to 4 notches faster, but it felt so good that you didn't notice. I'm a stickler for tempo and time but it's not an end all-be all for me. If it feels good, I don't really care if it speeds up or not. Human nature is going to speed up when the adrenaline kicks in. I would definitely say the number one thing is being able to play with a click or playing on top of programmed drums. You have to sound locked with the drum machine and can't flam.

Nate Robinson's current performance position takes on a unique approach to the adaptation of electronics, not only with the addition of sound but also the inclusion of customized instruments. Robinson explained:

> I play synthetic music so my challenge is always, at least the way I approach the music, my brain is always fixated on doing what is best for the music… So playing this synthetic music, I don't want it to sound too organic. One of the biggest challenges is trying to figure out how to always incorporate enough synthetic stuff. Even how I approach the notes that I'm playing on the actual acoustic drums, trying to make sure that my tones are really short because it's the synthetic stuff. When you're playing a sample, most of the time the cut off is going to be quick, so I have to make sure my drums are tuned a certain way. I have to make sure that the overtones, decay [sings pitch], are right and they are not too long because it's not that kind of music. Then I have to think about adding synthetic elements to my kit. For me, being innovative is probably another personality thing. I look around and it's like you said, everybody has an SPD [sampling pad]! My first thing was, I don't want an SPD because everybody else has one. So how can I still incorporate the same approach because I have to get some synthetic elements in here, but how can I do it without doing what everybody else does? That's why I came up with building my triggers into my shells. I have a couple of shells on my kit that are regular 10x4 shells, but I built the electronics into them. I use my computer as the brain and so I trigger everything from there so to the naked eye, it just looks like more drums. People are always asking, "Where did you get that? That snare on the side looks dope!" I just say thank you because they don't really know that it's electronic. It is an SPDS just in a different form. That also brings about the idea of making sure that you craft your sounds in a certain way. In the SPDS, there are stock sounds and you can sample them too. But I want to take them a step further than that. What's really cool in this situation is that I have access to the studio where I actually go, sit down with the head engineer dude, pull up the session for the songs and I'll snatch the sounds right out of the session. I get to edit those sounds so that way, whatever I'm using live are the exact same sounds that are on the record. So ultimately it just sounds like the record. Those are definitely some demands. If you want to do it right, you'll have to take a few extra steps but it's a challenge man and I love the challenge.

Why is gospel drumming important?

With the common denominator resulting in the participants receiving their foundational drumming within the walls of a church sanctuary, the importance of gospel drumming remained a passionate topic throughout their careers. The lessons gained during the formative years in church helped to shape their performance style that cannot be duplicated. Fred Dinkins asserted:

> Growing up in a church and learning how to play was one of the most valuable things I ever had the opportunity to do because it did prepare me. First, I could play every style there was and could adapt. Playing in church, you learn to become a chameleon. Whatever somebody plays, somehow you are able to adapt at the drop of the dime and make it feel right even if you're guessing. Now that I look at it, playing with a choir was like playing with a big band. You had to set up the choruses, you had to set up the accents and how you did it was up to you. The flavor that you did it with was up to you. The people that don't know how to play gospel or have never played it are normally the ones that always have an issue with feel. I've seen black kids that never grew up in church and can't play a shuffle. It blows me away and it's like "Really? What part of town did you come from? Where did you grow up?" Because if you went to a real black church, brother you learned how to play and you knew what music was. If you played in the band you know exactly what I'm saying.

Nate Robinson reported:

> Well, those lessons that I learned in church are some of the most invaluable lessons. You can learn to improvise in jazz, which is the place where improvisation is most prominent. But, when I started to dig into jazz, learning to improvise didn't freak me out because I had spent so much time playing in church. You have to follow a choir director who is improvising and things are just happening on the spot all the time. It's things like improvisation, being able to adjust to situations, surroundings and equipment at your disposure. Those things are really invaluable. No matter what I'm playing, I use those tools all of the time. I'm definitely grateful about getting my start in church. I know a lot of people that didn't start there and those are the things that they really have to work hard at. To me, those things are just natural and have been instilled for so long.

Not only has the gospel drumming community impacted their playing, but also the formative years in church provided a foundation of spirituality that remained with the participants throughout their lives and helped to impact others. Aaron Henry mentioned:

> I feel that gospel drumming is important for a few reasons. Not only is it important for you to learn how to play gospel music, but also it's important because you can minister to people through your playing. There may be some one out there watching me play that's getting healed from my playing. There may be some one out watching me play that wants to play gospel music like that one day.

Gorden Campbell stated:

> To me its two different things: Spiritually and foundationally because you have a standard no matter how far you go and it's funny because people think differently. A lot of people think, "If it's not gospel, it's sex, drugs and rock n' roll" all the time and it's not. But coming from church, I was more grounded. If I'm out doing a gig and people are doing something that's real crazy, I'm less likely to do it because I have some kind of foundation in my life. As a career and in anything, you want a foundation. You don't want to just live wildly and live on what the next man is doing. If they jump of a bridge, you jump off a bridge. If they smoke, you smoke. I'm not perfect but for me, I'll only go so far before I feel convicted in the spirit and feeling like it's too much and I won't do it.

Fred Dinkins added:

> I believe people miss the point. You get in a church and play, but if you are for real about it, you also get spirituality behind it. If you listen to a preacher, try to follow His word, and you become one with God, to me what's where your gift comes from. In order for you to reach that status and say, "Hey, I'm a gospel drummer" and be able to play at church and hold your ground with the rest of the musicians, you got to have that foundation. If you learn and understand what that foundation is of gospel drumming, it will take you a long way in your music career because it helps you to adapt to becoming that chameleon that you need to be. Especially where the music has come from. Listen to someone like Calvin [Rodgers], Teddy Campbell and Gordon Campbell. Those are guys that I really respect because they still have the old school stuff inside of what they do. They

> have a persona about themselves that they live their life in a way where you say "This guys has that spiritual connection" because it's the feel that you have to create. There are a lot of drummers out there that we know, but the ones that played in church, you can tell them right off the bat from the first beat that they play.

Nate Robinson further stated:

> The other greatest tool, the number one, the top of the charts tool is that you understand early on how to appreciate the Giver of the gift. It doesn't matter where I am, it doesn't matter how big the stages are, at the end of the day I understand that what I have is a gift and I know to play from that place. It is never about me and it's always about utilizing my gift. You never know who's listening. The same way I looked up to the guys in church, there's always someone looking at me. You will be inspiring someone and you never know who's sitting out there. They might be the next great drummer that changes the world and changes the art of drumming. That's definitely the greatest tool that I've received from getting my start in church. I know where my foundation is and nothing is more important than that.

The developmental training as a gospel drummer has proven to be an essential element in preparing the musicians to perform with mainstream artists in various genres. Additionally, the drummers are now equipped to accurately perform in highly attended venues. Gorden Campbell explained:

> Musically, and I've been saying this forever, playing in church gets you ready to play almost any style. For instance, you can take a rock drummer and put them in church and they sound terrible. You can put a rock drummer in a jazz club, and they sound terrible. You can take a gospel guy, put them on a Latin gig and he can at least play the beat or the basic groove. Songs like "Oh Lord we Praise You," or more up-to-date songs from say Jonathon Butler, that's a Latin groove, an actual Latin groove. So you now know that from playing gospel. You kind of get a head start on being versatile because it's so many different styles. Gospel music encompasses ballads, big power ballads to a CCM [Contemporary Christian Music] rock feel, so you can now play a rock thing. Fusion, all of the gospel stuff sounds like Chick Corea now or the *Yellow Jackets*. You have fusion chops, you

have the rock chops, you have some regular and basic gospel chops, and some is even jazzy. You look at some of the James Hall stuff and it's jazzy. In a nutshell, you get a broad scope of a bunch of different styles in church that a lot of other guys don't. Most of the guys that I know who grew up in church, they can play any gig. We can play any style, whereas the other guys can't play church, or they might not be able to play funk. They can play rock but they can't play jazz. Or the jazz guys can play that style, but don't ask them to play any pocket because it's terrible. Even if it's not perfect, the gospel cats can get through something because of our musical experience.

Campbell further added:

… You're playing in front of an audience already. So when you get a professional gig or tour, you're used to it. My first tour was back in 1993 and I was used to playing in front of big crowds because that's what I did at church. You're not as nervous doing it because you've gained a bit of experience playing in somewhat of a professional environment. Nowadays, a lot of the churches are big mega churches, and they, like the church I play at now, are basically professional gigs. We have in-ear monitors, we have soundmen, and we have monitor guys and techs to make sure everything is lined up. Everything is on a screen, everything is recorded, they make TV shows and DVDs, and so we're working on a professional level at an early age. That's definitely what helped me get prepared for outside playing. Musically, just playing so many different styles of songs at church, you're pretty much prepared for anything that comes in front of you.

Calvin Rodgers asserted:

As a kid, and even as a teenager, my introduction to different genres of music came through gospel music. Which is why I feel it's so influential and why it does so many things. This is why you're writing this dissertation. Gospel music is not just gospel music. We have 7-8 genres within one genre. There is no Country music and then country rap, and then country jazz, and then indie country, and then traditional country, contemporary country. There is just country music. Same for R&B. Jazz, you have a couple of different forms, maybe. You have traditional jazz, you got bebop, you got straight ahead, you got fusion, and then you have Latin jazz. But all of those are kinda set apart still. Gospel music, you have contemporary, traditional. We've got gospel rap, we've got instrumental gospel, we got CCM [Contemporary Christian] music, we've got adult contemporary Christian music, and we've got inspirational music. In all of those different

> settings of music, all of those different genres, you have to be well versed. So what has happened with gospel music is just that we've gotten to the point to where you have to know a lot about a lot of different music.

Nate Robinson said:

> One thing that jumps out immediately is knowing how to roll with the punches. One church I played at for years, the pastor was my friend's dad, it was a smaller church but their music department was really good… They did just as all churches do, they would visit other churches on Sunday afternoons and you might walk in and have to play on a couple trashcans and trash can lids. Industry wise, having to jump from all of these different situations, not having a monitor, and other stuff, I've pretty much dealt with every type of musical adversity that you could deal with while playing in church. One of the problems that I'm having on this current tour, because we have this crazy screen behind us, about 10 panels of LED screens in a weird configuration, if the room is big enough, I can have a sub [woofer speaker] behind me. But if the room is too small, I can't have a sub behind me. I like to have a sub behind me so that I don't have to overplay and I can feel the kick in my back. But I'm not crying about it when I can't have it because that's the kind of stuff that church prepares you for. You just roll with it. That's one big thing and I notice it all of the time. Whenever there is adversity, people just lose it. Right now, we're on tour and I get to use my own gear all of the time. Sometimes we will be out of the country and we'll do one-offs [one day performance and one day off/resting]. We did a show in Hong Kong not too long ago and their backline companies are not going to be as equipped as the companies in the States would be. The stuff that I have on my rider, I didn't get any of it. The first thing everyone does is to come look at me and thinks I'm going to go into diva mode because I have some whack drums. I'm thinking, "just give me a drum key, some moon gel and let's go." I'm not freaked out about that kind of stuff and it came from all of those experiences in church and visiting different churches. You just learn.

The music industry has begun to seek out those who have a background in gospel drumming. On many accounts, the leading pop, R&B and soul artists are now seeking to employ those who have acquired the traits from gospel drumming. Gorden Campbell explained:

> Everybody wants it now. Everybody wants a gospel drummer. They want it. Even if they don't know what it's called, it's the feel. And that's what we never even talked about. The number one thing is the feel, outside of the chops. It's the feel that we have from playing in church, because it's really a heartfelt thing. It's not reading music because we memorize. People trip out that we can memorize all of these songs for a service and most of them can't. They have to read it. If you take music off of the stand, it sucks. It's a wrap. Our whole thing is based on feel. Definitely the chops and the fills in between but that pocket is sweet. That's why I love Gerald Heyward so much because his pocket is crazy. Aaron Spears man, all of us. If you have any of us play a straight 2 and 4, there's a thing on it, a hump on there that a lot of guys don't know where it came from. Even in my clinics, when I talk about the pocket and the grace note thing, the pocket is the key. All of the church drummers have it and it is a feel you cannot explain. From Spanky, to Brian Frasier Moore, Lil' John Roberts, to the new cats coming up at Berkley, if you ask them to play 2 and 4, they know how to swing. It is an innate, cultural swing that they can't copy and that's the thing. That's what gets people gigs. If you have chops on top of it, then you're in the house for those gigs. To me, it really comes down to feel and that's of the utmost importance.

Jeff Davis added, "Now we have this surge of phenomenal musicians in mainstream. Every mainstream gig has a church guy, or a guy who was trained in church, in the drum seat. That has to say something about the contribution of the church as a training ground." Aaron Henry further stated:

> A lot of people want to say "Oh, those are nice gospel chops" when you're playing R&B music but if you look at it, in today, R&B mirrors everything in gospel and uses gospel fills. You have R&B taking from gospel now when it used to be gospel taking from R&B… that's mainly because of the R&B people going to get the gospel musicians. If you look at it, most of these guys, they won't admit it and try to deny that they're gospel musicians, but most of the R&B musicians come from gospel. And to this day, they are still playing gospel.

Admiration of the Craft

Many of the participants detailed the changes in the perception of contemporary gospel drumming within the last 20 years, and have witnessed a shift in the recognition

and visibility of those who have reached success through the style. Several participants have acknowledged the progression and aspire for more widespread acceptance of style. Jeff Davis stated, "Gospel drumming to me has been my life. That's what drumming is to me. It has been my life. My desire is to see gospel recognized as a genre the same as jazz, rock or R&B. For the most part it was undesignated for a long time and interlocked into the R&B realm because there was no one notable to document it." Calvin Rodgers expressed:

> It's kind of disheartening to know that, as a gospel drummer, you're not really recognized unless you do something else. Spanky [George McCurdy] deserves all the credit that he gets, but that dude was bad before [Lady] Gaga. That dude was outright bad before [Lady] Gaga and that's just the way it is. Aaron Spears was bad in Gideon Band. Listen, he was the MAN! I don't care who you hear him play for; you'll never hear him play any gig like he plays with Gideon. Never. Never ever. That's the way it goes. It's a little disheartening but we just have to fight through it, we try to press through it and we just work hard to be good in our craft. I've worked really hard to make sure that I'm professional at all times and that way, if someone just so happens to decide "We'll give this guy a shot…he's a gospel guy," I'm able to be what I need to be and I work hard at that. I study music, I study all genres, I study all forms of music and I try to make sure I'm well versed. I listen to everyone and I listen to all music. I just try to make sure that I'm on top of it and it's a lot of us guys out there that's like that. We aren't all just trying to get up, show out, and show you that we can out chop anybody and we can't play four measures straight. That's not the case.

Gorden Campbell viewed the negative overtone as the misrepresentation of amateur performers verses professional musicians. Campbell explained:

> Now on another note because I find myself having to defend it, when people say gospel chops, they say it in a derogatory way. They say it as if they are looking down at it. I'm saying, when you're watching those gospel chops videos and, the actual guys in the videos are not professional drummers. They are amateurs…you can't compare the two. If you're going to say "gospel drummers" and use that as a

> cover to say that this is how gospel drummers play, then use Teddy Campbell. Use Nisan Stewart, use Gerald Heyward, and use Marvin McQuitty or Calvin Rodgers. Those are the cats. If you're going to say "gospel drumming" and this is what gospel drummers do, use those and don't use the amateurs that are just really getting started… but I think it's gotten a bad name because you're judging the style off of these young cats that are shedding at a church. Nine times of out ten if you watch a shed, it's at a church somewhere. It's nothing wrong with that but they're amateurs and not professionals.

Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the information collected through the formative experiences of various leading gospel drumming artists and those with experience in gospel drumming. The data collected disclosed their developmental background, drumming influences, views on the evolution of gospel drumming and the demands placed on today's performing drummer. Revealed during the interviews were both the positive and negative aspects of today's gospel drummer, misconceptions associated with amateur performers, and the lack of acceptance amongst the drumming community.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

The focus of this chapter is to provide analysis from performance excerpts in contemporary gospel drumming and to breakdown the fills, grooves and patterns commonly associated within the playing. The categories discussed in this chapter will include drum and song introductions, Brooklyn-based fills, shout music, and drumming during solos and musical interludes. Each notable performance and transcription within the designated category is placed in chronological order. The key used to identify the specific instruments of the drum set is labeled in figure 1.

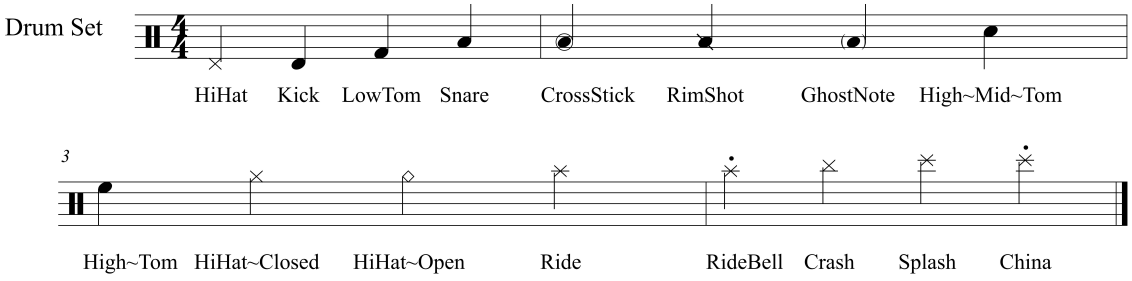

Figure 1. Drum Set Key

Drum and Song Introductions

During the early era of gospel music, the introductions to songs were simple in construction and predictable in musical form. Songs typically began with a short vamp or prelude of music from the chorus, which introduced the listeners to the key or melody

leading into the first verse. In 1978, Walter Hawkins released *Love Alive II*[81] with the song "Until I Found the Lord," which showcased one of the first instances of a drum groove used as an introduction. This song contained an opening four-to-the-floor drum solo pattern, which led into the vamp that served as a prelude to begin the song. A "four-to-the-floor" groove contains a single quarter note beat on the kick drum in 4/4 time, snare drum hits on beats 2 and 4, with quarter or eighth notes being played on the hi-hat. Figure 2 displays two variations of the "four-to-the-floor" drum pattern.

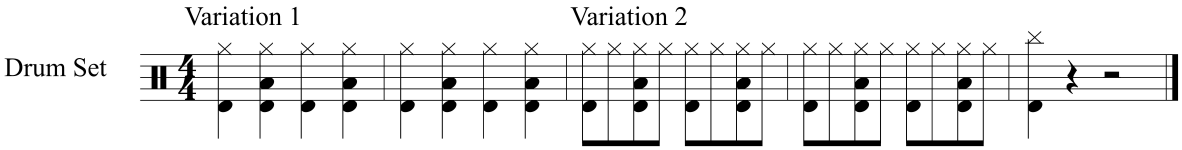

Figure 2. Four-to-the-Floor Drum Patterns

"Until I Found the Lord" played by drummer Joel Smith was a foundation to the future of gospel drumming as it featured a heavy funk groove, a strong back beat and brisk hi-hat activity. The transcription in figure 3 outlined the syncopation between the sixteenth notes and open/closed hi-hat chokes that were a new concept in gospel drumming at this time.

[81] Walter Hawkins, *Love Alive II,* (1978).

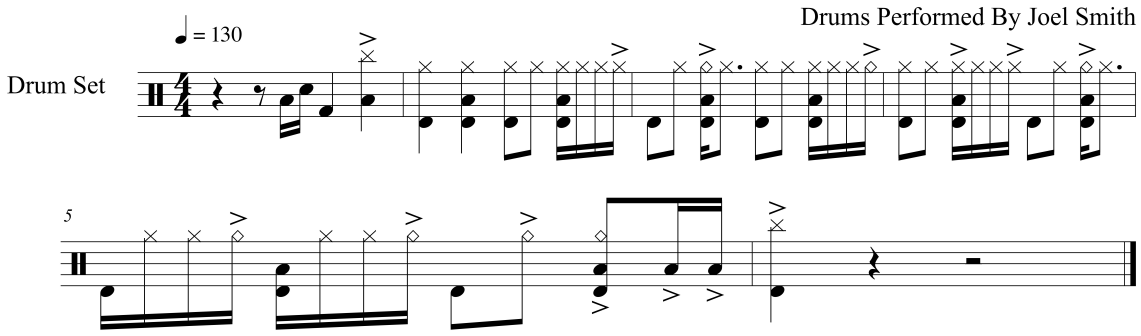

Figure 3. "Until I Found the Lord" Transcription (1978)

The musical inflections in gospel mirrored the styles of mainstream artists as hybridity shaped the religious realm of music.[82] The drumming in gospel music during the early 1980s focused on basic grooves, which echoed the musical patterns of mainstream artists. Edwin Hawkins and Andre Crouch's pop-gospel of the late 1960s and the Winans' smooth-soul gospel of the 1980s were all seen as hybrid expressions of their day.[83] Playing during this era was simplistic in nature, supportive in its musical role without considerable virtuosity with the priority being placed on time and feel.[84]

During the late 1980s, the young prodigy Chris Dave appeared on the gospel scene and helped change the dynamic of gospel drumming. Kathy Taylor & The Choraleers released *He's Worthy*[85] in 1988, with the song "Joy Cometh in the Morning." The song began with a brief piano, drum and bass vamp preceding the chorus. After the short introduction, the opening chorus was performed with a drum groove accompanying

[82] Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., *Race Music,* (2003), 191.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Fred Dinkins in discussion with author, September 2014.

[85] Kathy Taylor & The Choraleers, *He's Worthy,* (unknown, 1988), cassette tape.

the Choraleers. In measures 4-5 of the drum introduction shown in figure 4, Dave performed a syncopated fill and rhythmic pattern including flams on the toms that was uncommon in gospel drumming and extremely advanced for this time, especially for a teenaged performer.

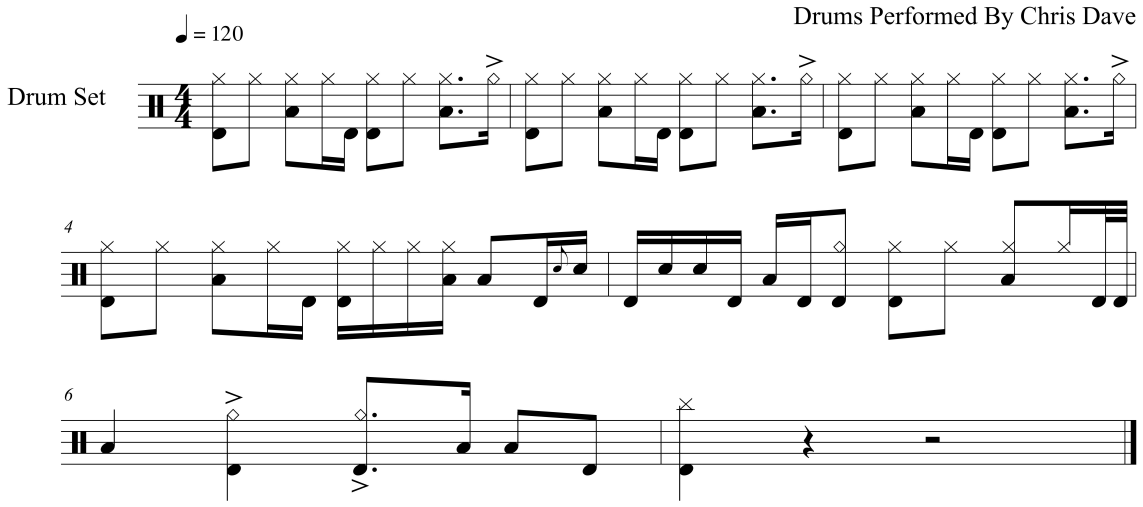

Figure 4. "Joy Cometh in the Morning" Transcription (1988)

Marvin Winans released his first album entitled *Marvin Winans Introducing Perfect Praise*[86] in 1992 that included the tune "Now Are We." The song began with an intense drum introduction played by Mario Winans that contained a new funk groove, syncopation, and alternating accents between the floor tom and kick drum. In figure 5, the ending fill of sextuplets notes descending from the high tom to the floor tom completed the introduction.

[86] Marvin Winans, *Marvin Winans Introducing Perfect Praise,* (1992).

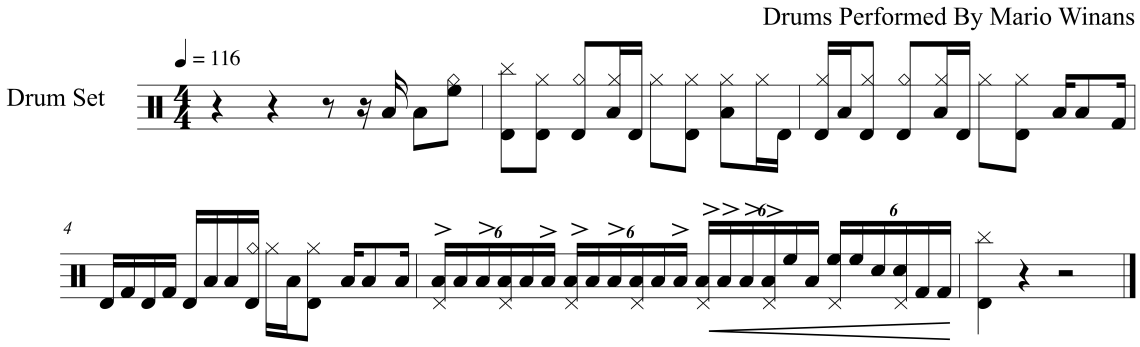

Figure 5. "Now Are We" Transcription (1992)

This type of drumming was an example of the initial growth in musical activity from the drummer in contemporary gospel music during the early 1990s. The linear patterns and separation of voices were being used to create new grooves, and the increase in speed of notes and accents were techniques that continued to develop. At this time, quarter and eighth-note patterns were being replaced by sixteenth and sextuplet rhythms. The Jeff "Lo" Davis drum introduction to James Hall's "King of Glory" from the 1995 album, *King of Glory: Live in Montreal*[87] surprised the gospel drumming community by incorporating linear fills. The linear fill in figure 6 became a standard for gospel drumming[88] and was emulated by future drummers throughout the industry.

[87] James Hall, *King of Glory: Live in Montreal,* (1995).

[88] Stephen Styles, "Jeff Davis," http://search.proquest.com/docview/821026030?accountid=12711.

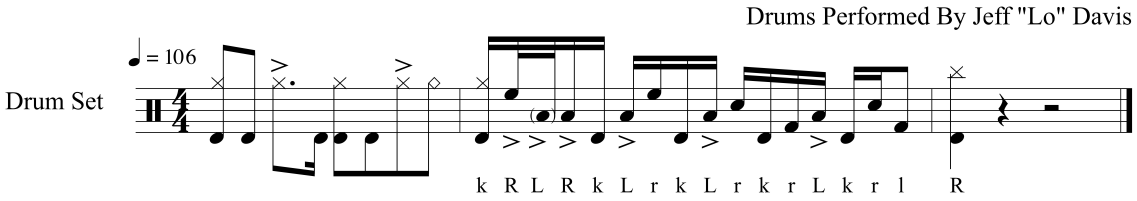

Figure 6. "King of Glory" Transcription (1995)

The state of gospel drumming was already musically progressing, but this recorded fill brought the example to a multitude of gospel listeners. Davis stated, "I was just doing what felt good, so for most of the tune I focused on grooving. The lead-in on the intro and the lick at the end were just the extra stamps on it. I wasn't trying to change the game. That sound was already evolving in and around New York. I just put it out there for the rest of the country to hear about."[89]

The sound that Jeff Davis mentioned in the Modern Drummer interview began with the music of Brooklyn native Pastor Hezekiah Walker and drummer Gerald Heyward. Walker's 1995 single "I'll Be Satisfied" from the *Live in New York: By Any Means Necessary*[90] featured a sixteenth note drum fill between the snare drum, kick drum and toms by Jason Hendricks. Figure 7 showed how the syncopation of notes began to incorporate each limb (arm/hands, feet) to create new fills.

[89] Stephen Styles, "Jeff Davis," http://search.proquest.com/docview/821026030?accountid=12711.

[90] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *Live in New York,* (1995).

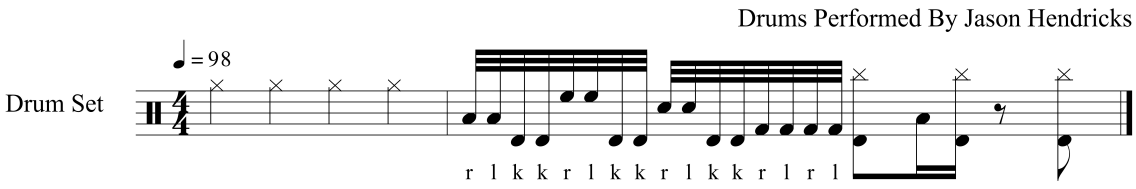

Figure 7. "I'll Be Satisfied" Transcription (1995)

The inclusion of sextuplet notes and linear separation continued with the drum introduction to "Stir up the Gift" by Joe Pace and the Colorado Mass from the *Watch God Move*[91] album released in 1997. The transcription in figure 8 displayed the short fill that included sixteenth-note triplets followed by a sextuplet pattern ending on the kick drum. Previous sextuplet patterns were used on the snare drum with accents but this fill included the kick drum, which was rare for a drum introduction.

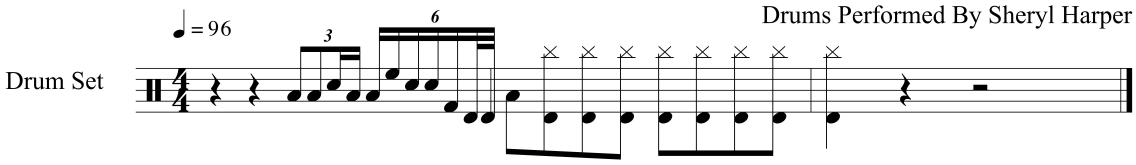

Figure 8. "Stir Up the Gift" Transcription (1997)

By 1997, elongated drum introductions were considered the standard in contemporary gospel drumming. Drummers were allowed to establish a groove pattern similar to that of previous eras, but the opening and ending fills displayed more rhythmic activity. "Glory to Glory" from the *Pages of Life: Chapters 1&2*[92] album by Fred Hammond and Radical for Christ featured a drum introduction in figure 9 from the late

[91] Joe Pace and the Colorado Mass Choir, *Watch God Move,* (1997).

[92] Fred Hammond, *Pages of Life: Chapters 1&2,* (1998).

Marvin McQuitty. This drum introduction included buzz/press rolls, a funk groove pattern, and variations in rhythmic fills.

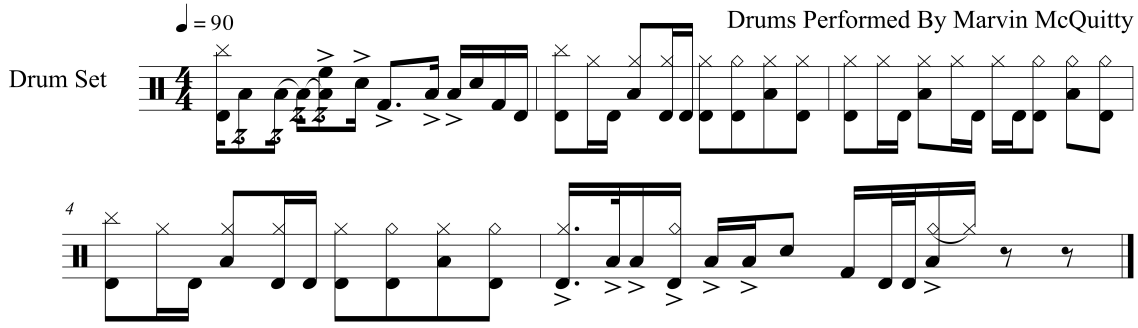

Figure 9. "Glory to Glory" Transcription (1998)

The freedom of elongated drum introductions encouraged new musical liberties in rhythm and syncopation. Different artists brought changes in styles of music and with these changes emerged new ideas for drumming. The opening track entitled "Mighty God" by John P. Kee and the New Life Community Choir's *Strength*[93] album released in 1998 featured an opening drum introduction by LaDell Abrams. The displacement of accents, variations in rhythmic values, and incorporation of thirty-second notes were brought to gospel drumming in this excerpt. Ghost notes on the left hand were prevalent throughout this passage that allowed certain notes to be more present than others, giving the solo a distinct sound and interpretation. A YouTube® video[94] has been made available for viewing that aided in the transcription and analysis of in figure 10.

[93] John P. Kee, *Strength*, (1998).

[94] LaDell Abrams, *Mighty God/Outstanding –John P. Kee & the New Life Community Choir,* October 15 2009, video recording, 8:20, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kayymBeDgww.

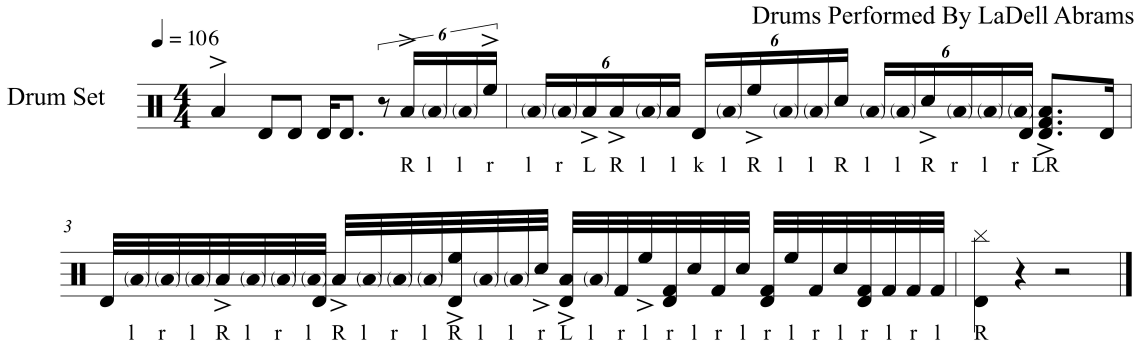

Figure 10. "Mighty God" Transcription (1998)

The musical liberties in drum introductions continued into the new millennium as techniques, phrasing, and virtuosic performances progressed with each passing year. Musical introductions became more advanced and technical in ability by steadily increasing speed and movement around the drum set. For example, in 2001 Kim Burrell released her *Live in Concert*[95] album that contained an opening drum introduction that was innovative in the industry (see fig. 11).

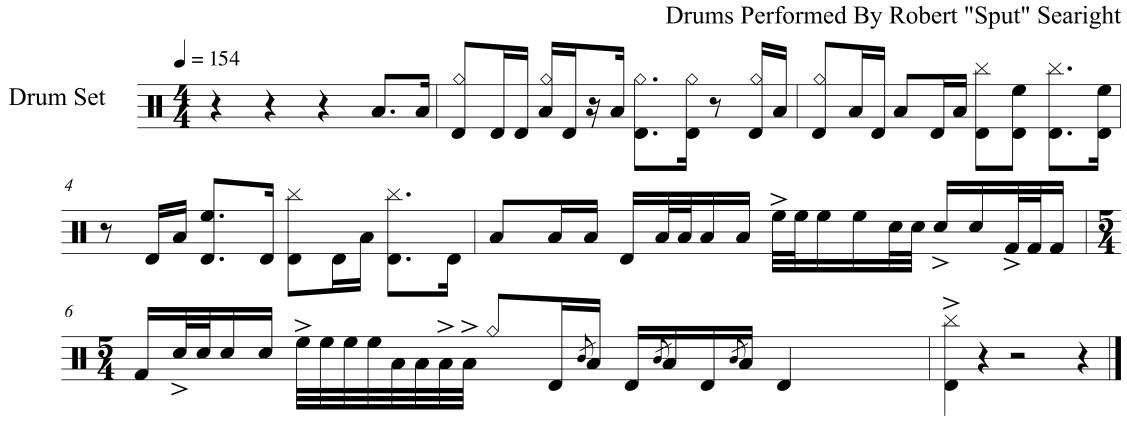

Figure 11. "I'll Keep Holding On" Transcription (2001)

[95] Kim Burrell, *Live in Concert*, (2001).

Drum introductions before "I'll Keep Holding On" included some form of a backbeat to establish a sense of time. This excerpt steered from the normal introductions by varying the backbeat and not establishing a firm meter. This opening passage, in figure 11 by Robert "Sput" Searight, contained quick, linear separations between the hands and the kick drum, hybrid rudiments (hurtas), and thirty-second notes descending and then ascending around the toms.

In 2006, Myron Butler and Levi released the *Set Me Free*[96] album and Robert "Sput" Searight appeared as the drummer and musical director. On the title track, the drum introduction included a heavy, driving tom pattern with accents on the snare. The first instance of extensive toms usage as an introductory instrument occurred on Richard Smallwood's "Anthem of Praise" from the 2001 release *Persuaded: Live in D.C.*[97] by Jeff Davis.

> In some of my time off the road, I worked in some of the playhouses on Broadway, where I had to play timpani and auxiliary percussion, and I had my toms tuned to line up with the piano or other instruments at certain parts of the show. I brought that approach to "Anthem Of Praise" because it was such a big-sounding song, and it called for that.[98]

The introduction played by Jeff Davis did not use the snare drum and was solely based on a timpani interpretation. The "Set Me Free" transcription in figure 12 used the entire drum set (minus the hi-hat), maintained a consistent pulse, and accents on the kick

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[96] Myron Butler, *Set Me Free*, (EMI Gospel (EGS), 2006), CD.

[97] Richard Smallwood, *Persuaded: Live in D.C.*, (Verity Records, 2001), CD.

[98] Stephen Styles, "Jeff Davis," http://search.proquest.com/docview/821026030?accountid=12711.

drum. Linear fills that evolved from previous drummers such as Jeff Davis and Gerald Heyward can be found in the last measure.

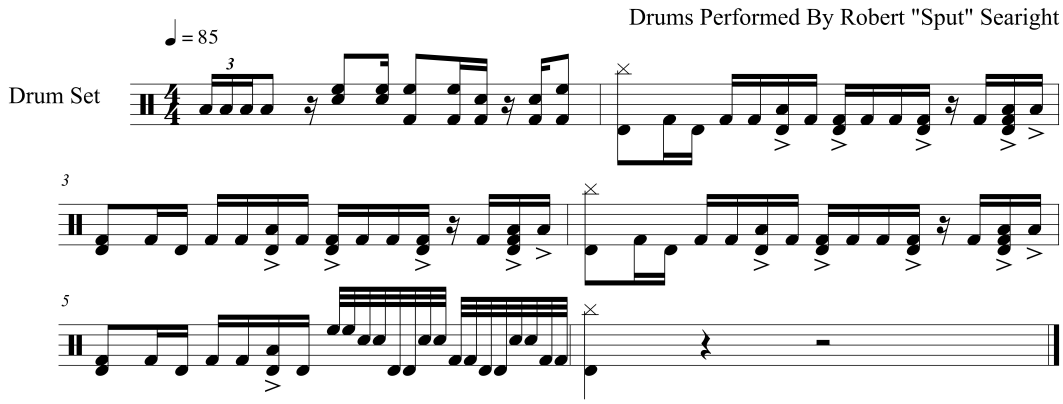

Figure 12. "Set Me Free" Transcription (2006)

Calvin Rodgers has become a leader in gospel drumming and is admired by past and present performers. He has performed with Bishop Larry Trotter, John P. Kee, The Clark Sisters, Israel Houghton, Vashawn Mitchell and countless others. Rodgers currently serves as the music director for the gospel great Fred Hammond and has performed on the last three Marvin Sapp CD releases (*Thirsty, Here I Am, I Win).*[99] The critically acclaimed 2007 *Thirsty* album won numerous awards including Gospel Stella Awards for music video of the year, producer of the year, artist, CD, and song of the year. The *Thirsty* album displayed the full range of Rodgers' playing including opening introductions, solos, and fills. Continuing with the progression of elongated drum introductions, his aggressive approach to "Possess the Land" displayed his evolution of ghost notes, linear fills and rudimental application. The transcription in figure 13 includes

[99] Marvin Sapp, *Thirsty* (2007); *Here I Am* (2010); *I Win*, (Verity Records, 2012), CD.

suggested sticking to assist players with paradiddle-diddle rudimental pattern found in the Rodgers interpretation.

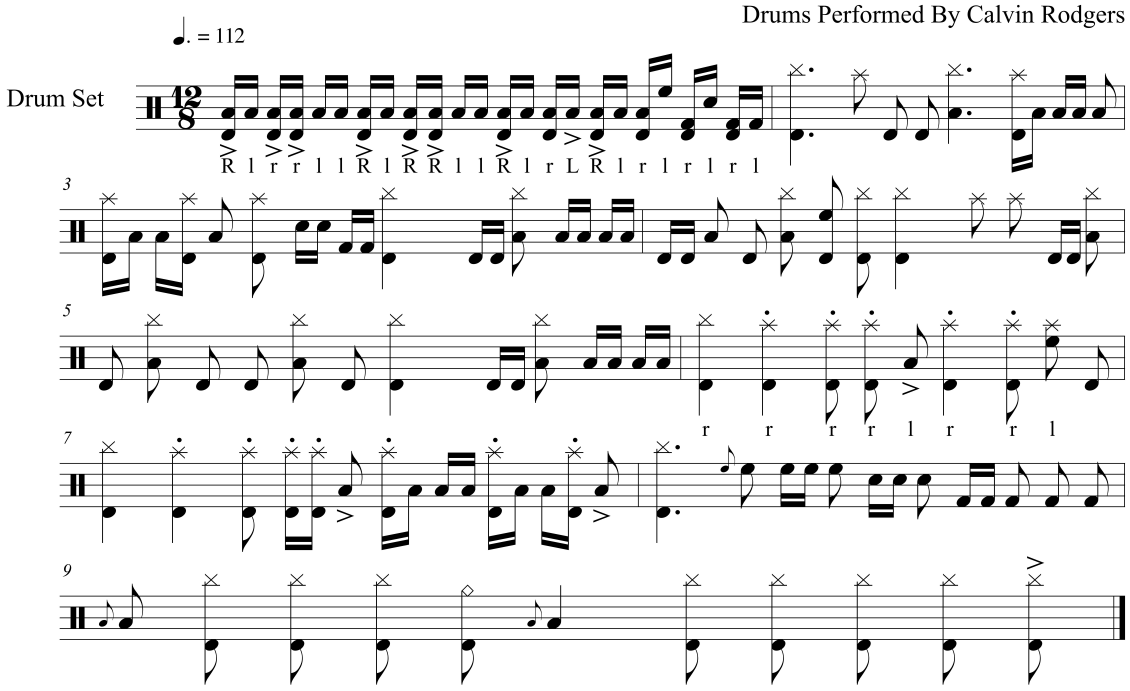

Figure 13. “Possess the Land” Transcription (2007)

The opening fill was based on a paradiddle-diddle with the right-hand accents being doubled with the kick drum. Measure 6 of the excerpt contained an outline of the double paradiddle that has been commonly found in triple meter ballads. In this instance, Rodgers omitted the left hand ghost notes, which then created the pattern of R(l)R(l)RR as he emphasized the right hand with the bass drum.

While still maintaining rudimental virtuosity, drummers were being required to enhance the sound of their instruments to support a larger-scale drum introduction. Players began using cymbals as fillers for sound and effect, while also showcasing the

chops that have become the standard in gospel drumming. The 2008 *Right Now Praise*[100] album release by Jonathan Nelson featured the opening song to the live concert entitled "Champions." This track featured an elongated introduction from the band with intricate and precise drumming from Michael Reid, who is viewed as an up-and-coming drum set artist in both the gospel and pop genres. The transcription in figure 14 detailed the use of open and closed hi-hats, ride cymbal and bell interaction and also the inclusion of linear fills.

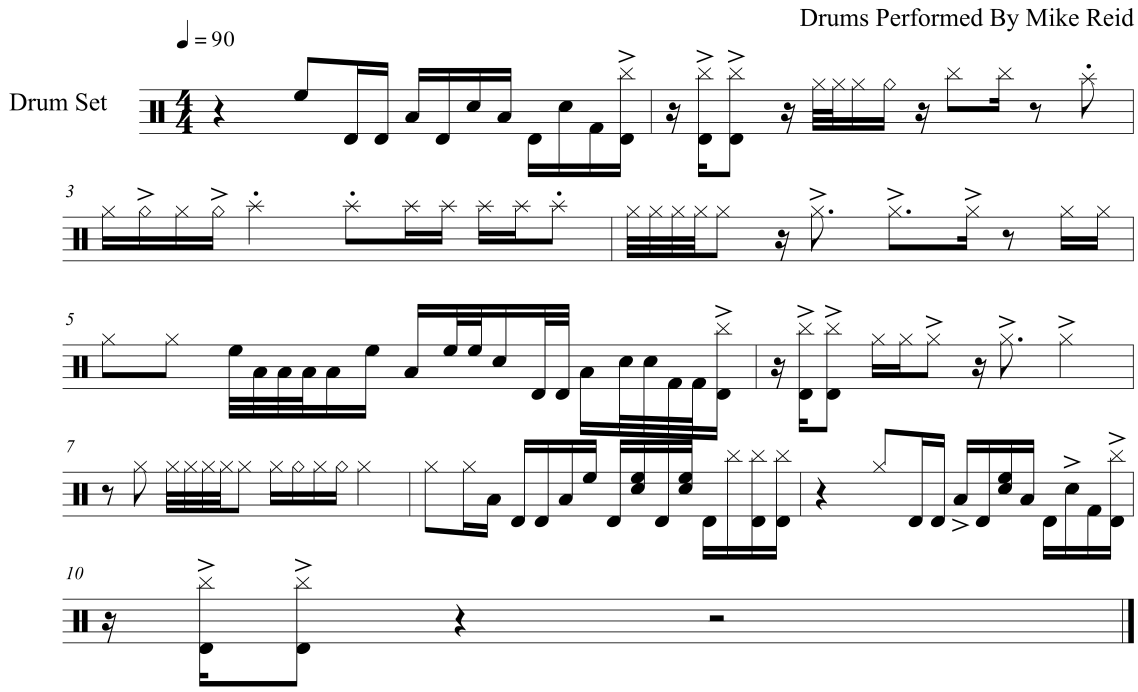

Figure 14. "Champions" Transcription (2008)

[100] Jonathan Nelson, *Right Now Praise*, (Integrity Records, 2008), CD.

The 2012 release of "Never Again" from the James Fortune *Identity*[101] album ignited a frenzy as Calvin Rodgers performed an aggressive drum introduction that had not been previously recorded. The 2001 "I'll Keep Holding On" introduction by Robert "Sput" Searight was a similar excerpt due to the initial introduction that included a small hint of a groove but the sheer amount of speed, rudimental approach, and virtuosity was unmatched by Rodgers performance in "Never Again." In addition, the progression of the 2007 "Possess the Land" rudimental fill (see fig. 15) performed by Rodgers contributed to the evolution of drumming and has become a standard in the industry for application and approach.

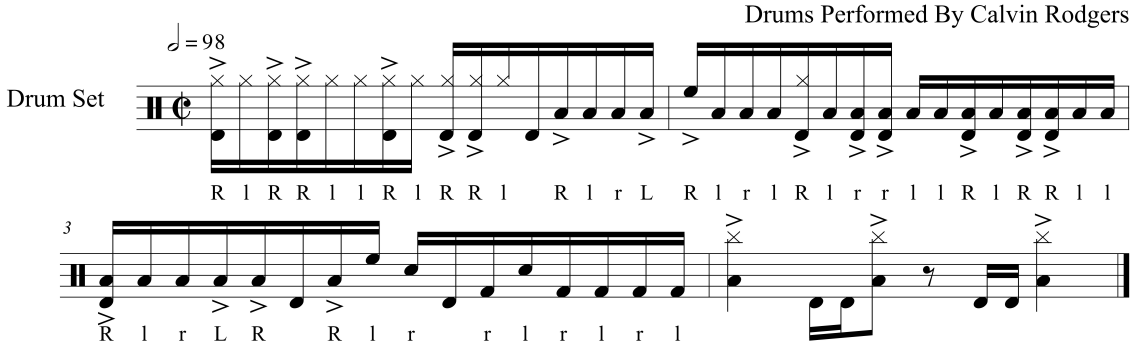

Figure 15. "Never Again" Transcription (2012)

The paradiddle-diddle pattern previously used in "Possess the Land" (see fig.13) was used again in figure 15 but found in the thirty-second note rhythm. The paradiddle-diddle was first used on the hi-hat and then separated between the hi-hat and snare drum. The technique of performing and voicing the rudimental-based fill in this manner has become popular with amateur drummers.

[101] James Fortune, *Identity,* (Light Records, 2012), CD.

The evolution of the drum introduction has progressed from simple patterns to the incorporation of rudiment-based and linear fills. The rate of speed used to perform these types of fills requires a high amount of skill to produce this characteristic sound and has often been referred to as what is now known as "gospel chops." Table 1 includes a list of notable songs where the evolution of drum and song introductions is found in gospel drumming.

Table 1. List of Notable Drum and Song Introductions

Year	Song	Artist	Album	Drummer
1978	Until I Found The Lord	Walter Hawkins	*Love Alive II*	Joel Smith
1981	Handwriting on the Wall	Andre Crouch	*Don't Give Up*	Bill Maxwell
1992	Now Are We	Marvin Winans	*Marvin Winans Introducing Perfect Praise*	Mario Winans
1995	King of Glory	James Hall	*King of Glory*	Jeff "Lo" Davis
1995	I'll Be Satisfied	Hezekiah Walker	*Live in New York: By Any Means Necessary*	Jason Hendricks
1997	Mighty God	John P. Kee	*Strength*	LaDell Abrams
1997	Stir Up the Gift	Joe Pace and the Colorado Mass Choir	*Watch God Move*	Sheryl Harper
1998	Glory to Glory	Fred Hammond	*Pages of Life: 1 & 2*	Marvin McQuitty

2001	I'll Keep Holding On	Kim Burrell	*Kim Burrell: Live in Concert*	Robert "Sput" Searight
2005	Set Me Free	Myron Butler and Levi	*Set Me Free*	Robert "Sput" Searight
2005	That Place	Myron Butler and Levi	*Set Me Free*	Robert "Sput" Searight
2007	Chasing After You	Vashawn Mitchell	*Triumphant*	Calvin Rodgers
2007	Magnify	Marvin Sapp	*Thirsty*	Calvin Rodgers
2007	Power	Marvin Sapp	*Thirsty*	Calvin Rodgers
2007	Possess the Land	Marvin Sapp	*Thirsty*	Calvin Rodgers
2007	For My Good	Vashawn Mitchell	*Promises*	Calvin Rodgers
2008	Champions	Jonathan Nelson	*Right Now Praise*	Mike Reid
2008	I Made It Through	Tye Tribbett & G.A.	*Stand Out*	George "Spanky" McCurdy
2009	In The Midst	Byron Cage	*Faithful to Believe*	Calvin Rodgers
2010	Revealed	Myron Butler and Levi	*Revealed: Live in Dallas*	Robert "Sput" Searight
2010	Covered	Myron Butler and Levi	*Revealed: Live in Dallas*	Robert "Sput" Searight
2010	It Was You	James Fortune and FIYA	*Encore*	Rodney Dorsey, Jr.
2010	You Are Here	James Fortune and FIYA	*Encore*	Rodney Dorsey, Jr.

2012	Best Days	Tamela Mann	*Best Days*	Robert "Sput" Searight
2012	Never Again	James Fortune and FIYA	*Identity*	Calvin Rodgers

Brooklyn Fills

Many artists in gospel music influenced young people at the regional level before making a larger impact on the entire gospel community. The Brooklyn, New York-based Pastor Hezekiah Walker was the leader of the Love Fellowship Tabernacle Church Choir, one of the most popular choral groups in contemporary gospel history. Debuting in 1986 with Crusade Choir, Walker and his singers quickly became one of the star attractions on the church circuit, earning their greatest success to date when 1994's *Live in Atlanta at Morehouse College* album won a Grammy award. After a series of subsequent live recordings, they released *Hezekiah Walker Presents the LFT Church Choir* in 1998, recorded at Brooklyn's Love Fellowship Tabernacle. *Family Affair* followed a year later, and *Love Is Live!*[102] was released in early 2001.[103] Specific fills in gospel drumming can be traced back to a particular source and the fills from Hezekiah Walker's initial drummers (Heyward and Davis) played a large role in the expansion of gospel drumming.

[102] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *Live in Atlanta at Morehouse College*, (Benson Music Group, 1994); *Hezekiah Walker Presents the LFT Church Choir* (1998); *Family Affair* (1999); *Love is Live!*, (Verity Records, 2001), CD.

[103] Steve Leggett, "Bibliography: Hezekiah Walker," *www.allmusic.com,* accessed August 3, 2014, http://www.allmusic.com/artist/hezekiah-walker-mn0002744831/biography.

The Brooklyn fills, or "rolls" as many have called them because of the double strokes between the hands and the bass drum, became a staple of gospel drumming and can be found in numerous recordings in several different variations. Double-stroke rolls contain two strokes on a single hand but essentially the Brooklyn fill became a sixteenth or thirty-second note pattern. Known for using fills dominated by the bass drum, many of the Brooklyn drummers incorporated isolated fills primarily for the bass drum or introduced variations using alternating single and double bass drum strokes. Hezekiah Walker and the Crusade Choir recorded the first instance of the Brooklyn fill during the title track from the 1986 *I'll Make It*[104] album. The transcription in figure 16 shows a sextuplet rhythm with the single stroke on the snare and double strokes on the bass drum. The player could alternate the voicing for this fill by applying the single stroke to either the snare or toms of the drum set.

[104] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *I'll Make It,* (Sweet Rain, 1986), CD.

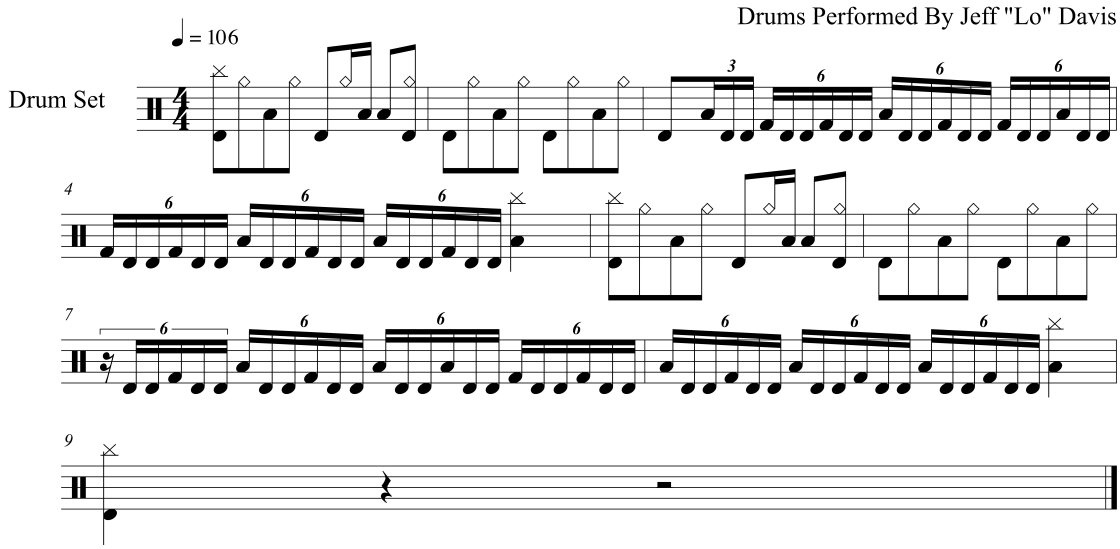

Figure 16. "I'll Make It" Transcription (1986)

"Clean (Inside)" appeared on the 1993 *Live in Toronto*[105] album by Hezekiah Walker and featured an isolated bass drum fill. Highly syncopated for its time, the fill was based on the sextuplet rhythm with the snare playing on the first beat and the bass drum playing on the subsequent upbeats (2,4, and 6 of the sextuplet rhythm). The transcription in figure 17 outlines the syncopated rhythm that used the bass drum as a dominating voice in the Brooklyn fill.

[105] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *Live In Toronto*, (Verity Records, 1993), CD.

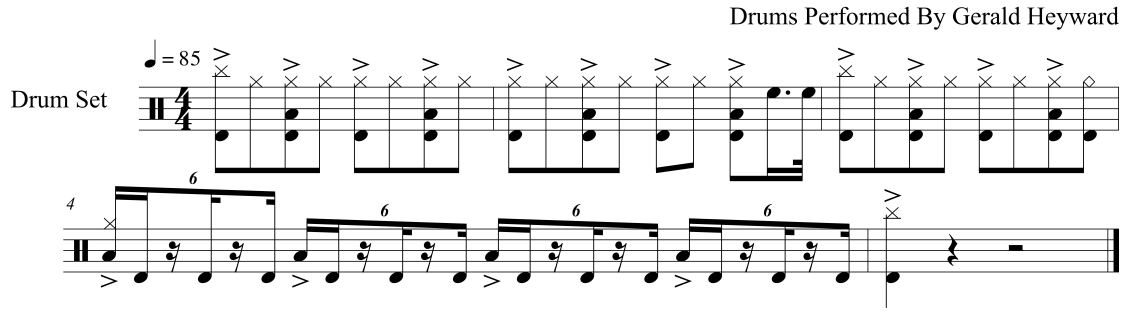

Figure 17. “Clean (Inside)” Transcription (1993)

Jeff Davis was previously mentioned for his drumming on the James Hall’s “King of Glory”[106] as an introductory fill, but his ending performance incorporated the technique and features of the Brooklyn fill. Davis was one of the first drummers to voice the sextuplet fill around the drum set by incorporating the snare and toms in a descending motion. This style of drumming in figure 18 was already being used in Brooklyn but recording this fill helped to spread the style and influence of the Brooklyn drummers to the various congregations and denominations within gospel music.

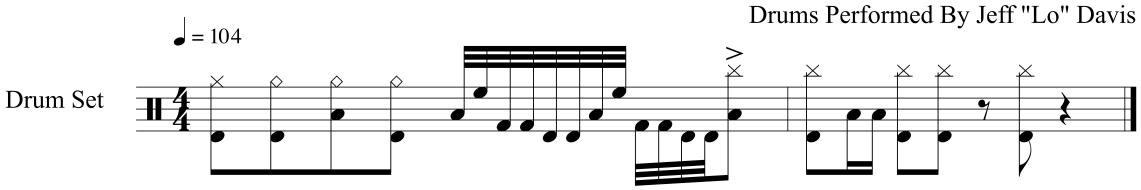

Figure 18. “King of Glory” ending Transcription (1995)

Alternating single strokes on each hand with double strokes on the bass drum created the rolls in the Brooklyn fills. One of the last fills played on “I Will Bless the

[106] James Hall, *King of Glory: Live in Montreal,* (1995).

Lord" from Hezekiah Walker's *Live at the Fellowship Tabernacle*[107] album featured a Brooklyn fill with a thirty-second note pattern being played between the snare, toms and double strokes on the bass drum.

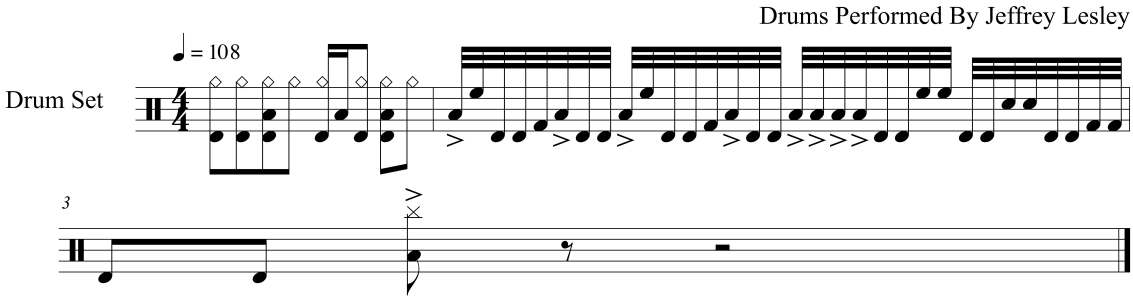

Figure 19. "I Will Bless the Lord" Transcription (1998)

The transcription in figure 19 also illustrates the changes in voicing with similar fills. When played, the single strokes are separated between the snare and high tom, then floor tom and snare, ending with strokes on an individual drum. Although individual artists may use different drummers, regional influence can be seen through their performance. Figure 20 is the transcription of the same fill being played by Jeffrey Lesley on "Can't Nobody," another Hezekiah Walker song from the *Family Affair*[108] album released in 1999. Lesley is also a native of Brooklyn, New York.

[107] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *Live at the Fellowship Tabernacle*, (Verity Records, 1998), CD.

[108] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *Family Affair*, (1999).

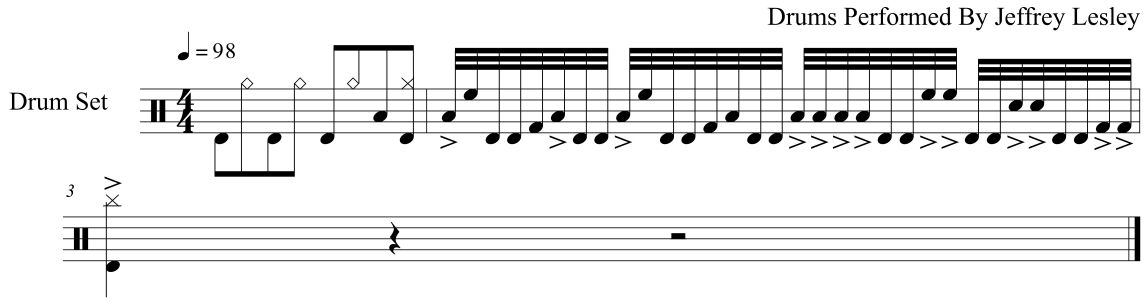

Figure 20. “Can’t Nobody” Transcription (1999)

In 2002, Hezekiah Walker released the album *Family Affair Vol. 2 - Live At Radio City Music Hall*[109] with a remake of “I’ll Make It” featuring the vocalist John P. Kee. The ending fill in figure 21 evolved from the previous recording 15 years earlier, which was based in triplets with sextuplets but is now found in duple form with thirty-second notes. The voicing of the fill is similar to the transcription found in figures 19 and 20.

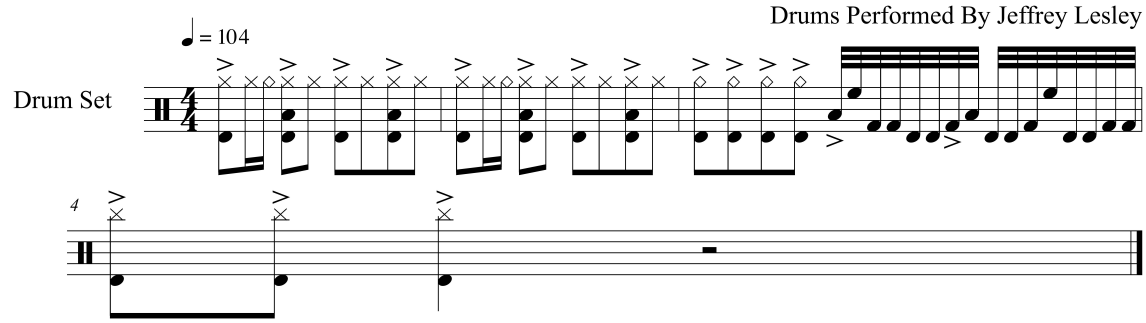

Figure 21. “I’ll Make It” Transcription (2002)

Fred Hammond’s 2006 remake of “This is the Day,”[110] a well-known devotional hymn that was given an upbeat and contemporary feel, featured an aggressive fill from

[109] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *Family Affair Vol. 2* (2002).

[110] Fred Hammond, *Free to Worship,* (Verity Records, 2006), CD.

Calvin Rodgers that evolved from the earlier Brooklyn fills. Rodgers used the fill as a transition leading into the ending vamp of the song. The accented notes beginning in measure three coincide with unison hits from the entire band (see fig. 22).

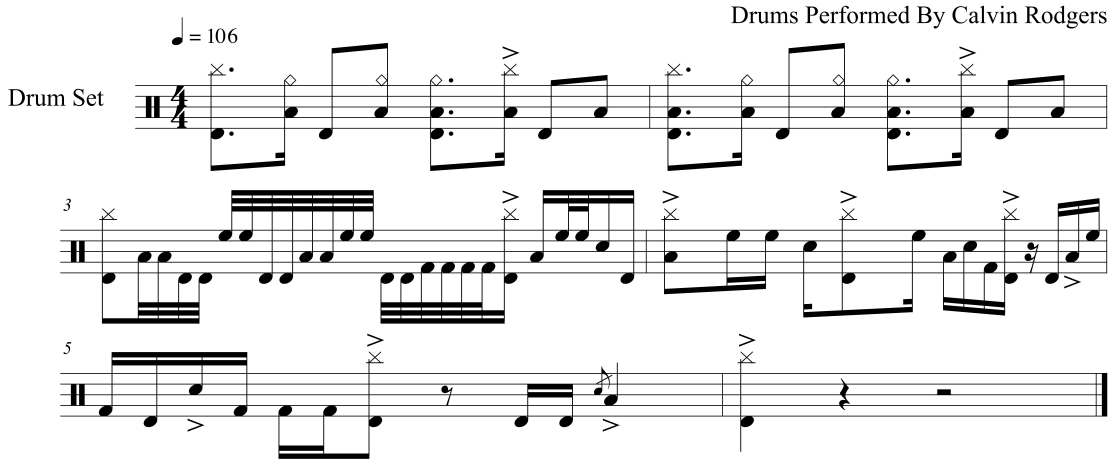

Figure 22. "This is The Day" Transcription (2006)

The 2006 release of Tye Tribbett and G.A.'s *Victory Live!*[111] included the song "Everything Will Be Alright." The drumming from George "Spanky" McCurdy featured numerous innovative fills, but one in particular incorporated the Brooklyn style of bass drum-dominated rolls. All of the previous Brooklyn fills have been found in the sextuplet rhythm based in a 4/4 time signature. The transcription in figure 23 details how the fill was played in a 12/8 time signature with sixteenth notes. McCurdy voiced the fill with alternating hands on the snare and toms, while placing double strokes on the bass drum.

[111] Tye Tribbett & G.A, *Victory Live!* (2006).

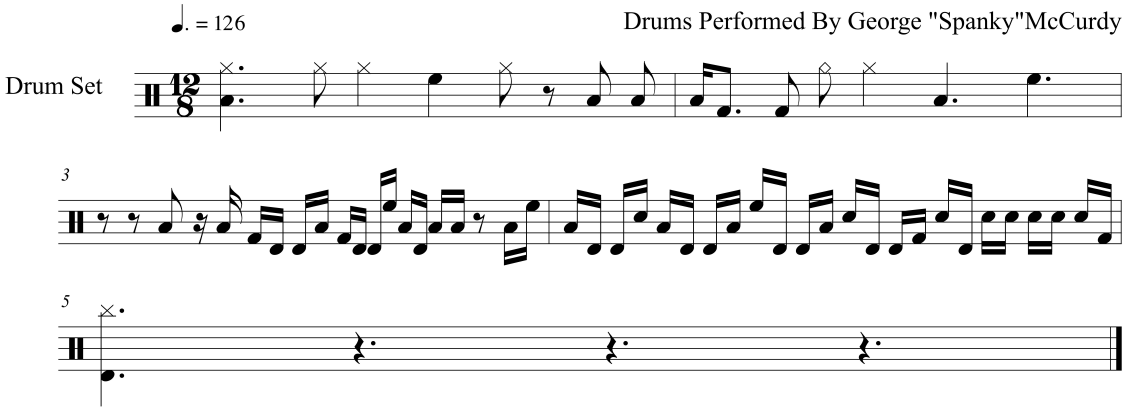

Figure 23. “Everything Will Be Alright” Transcription (2006)

Culture and creativity can promote innovation and a simple fill used regionally was brought to the masses of gospel drumming through recorded music. The Brooklyn fills helped to advance gospel drumming by incorporating double strokes on the bass drum and alternating strokes between the snare and toms with bass strokes to create a double stroke roll effect.

Shout Music and Kratophany

The structure and organization of a church service is heavily reliant upon music to aid in the flow and progression. Traditional services typically begin with a devotional period inclusive of hymns, while newer, contemporary services use a designated praise and worship period. Musical performances later in the service include the choir or praise team, depending on the denomination of the congregation. One pivotal point in either denominational service is the sermon given by the appointed speaker designated for the day, which on most occasions is the senior pastor. A style of preaching commonly found in most black churches includes chanted sermon and melodic pitch. The chanted sermon

is a unique form of sacred song combining melody, rhythm, call and response, polyphony, rational content, and improvisation.[112] Musicologist William Turner, using a term coined by religious historian Mircea Eliade, has called the chanted a "*kratophany.*"

> The music of black preaching can be understood as a sort of "singing in the spirit," for there is a *surplus* (glossa) expressed in music which accompanies the rational content (logos) expressed in the words. The rational portion is contained in the formal structure of the sermon, which reflects the homiletical soundness, and the doctrinal tradition in which the preacher stands. For the glossa portion, the preacher becomes an instrument of musical afflatus: a flute through which divine air is blown, a harp upon which eternal strings vibrate. For the sake of audience, the preacher becomes an oracle through which a divinely inspired message flows.[113]

When the rhythm, tone and pitch of the preaching is recognized, music begins to accompany the minister that assists in the flow and progression of the service. Once the service reaches an emotional climax, members of the congregation (sometimes described by the participants as being filled with the Holy Spirit) begin to run, dance, and shout praises, accompanied by "*shout music*." The term has been given different names such as "*bump*" depending on the region or denomination of the church, but the term most commonly known as *shout music*, is a style of music that accompanies *kratophany*. This music is performed at a brisk, cut time tempo ranging from 140bpm to as fast as 200bpm.[114] Constant eighth notes are played on the hi-hat, ride cymbal or bell of the ride, the bass drum is played on beats 1 and 3, as the snare drum is played on beats 2 and 4.

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[112] Jon Michael Spencer, *Protest and Praise* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1978) 238.

[113] William C. Turner, "The Musicality of Black Preaching: A Phenomenology," *Journal of Black Sacred Music 2,* no.1 (Spring 1988): 22,29.

[114] *Gospel and R&B Drumming*, hosted by Jeff Davis (2011; 2013).

The transcription in figure 24 displays the traditional drum pattern found in early shout music. Figure 25 is a variation that incorporates changes in hi-hat patterns that could also be played on the ride cymbal or bell of the ride. The shout music is also performed with a moving, melodic bass line similar to a walking jazz or blues line.

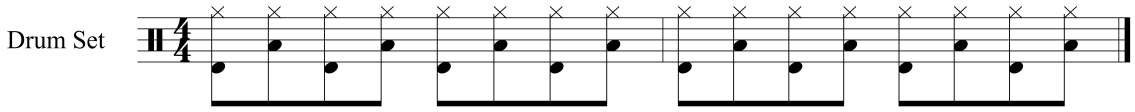

Figure 24. Traditional Shout Music Transcription

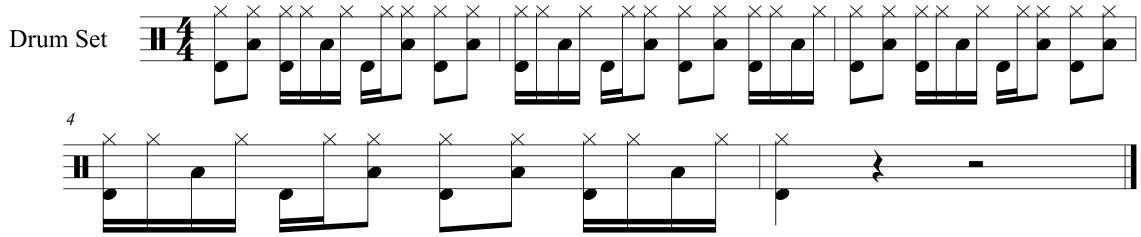

Figure 25. Shout Music Variation Transcription

The first instance of recorded shout music was in the second half of "Until I Found the Lord" by Walter Hawkins from the *Love Alive II*[115] album. Joel Smith's playing on this recording was typical of drumming at the time and mimics the transcription in figure 24. In 1986, Walter Hawkins performed "Until I Found the Lord" at the Legends of Gospel Concert in Los Angeles, CA[116], and during this performance, Smith performed a variation of the shout music found in figure 26.

[115] Walter Hawkins, *Love Alive II,* (1978).

[116] *Legends of Gospel in Concert*, directed by David Leivick and Frederick Ritzenberg, (1986; Los Angeles, CA: Monterey Video, 2005), DVD.

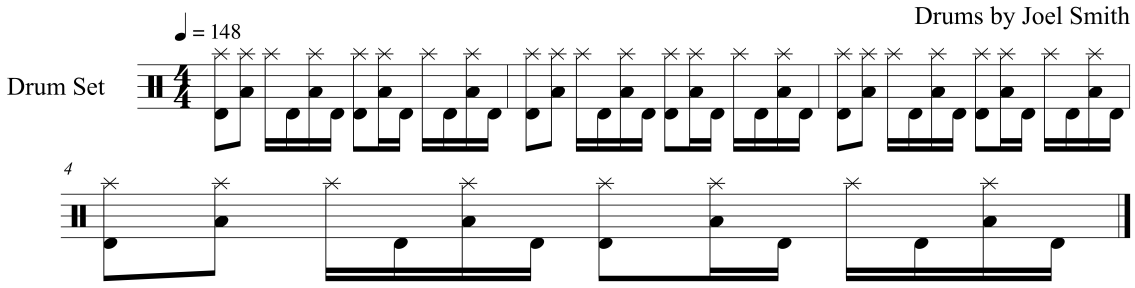

Figure 26. “Until I Found the Lord” Shout Music Transcription (1986)

The 1990 Walter Hawkins’ *Love Alive IV*[117] album featured another shout music tune entitled “Who Shall Separate Us” that showcased another variation of drumming from Joel Smith. The transcription in figure 27 began with unison hits from the hi-hat and snare drum on the upbeats while a syncopated bass drum pattern continued throughout. The next variation contained a musical pattern similar to figure 26 with constant eighth notes on the ride cymbal and snare drum hits on beats 2 and 4.

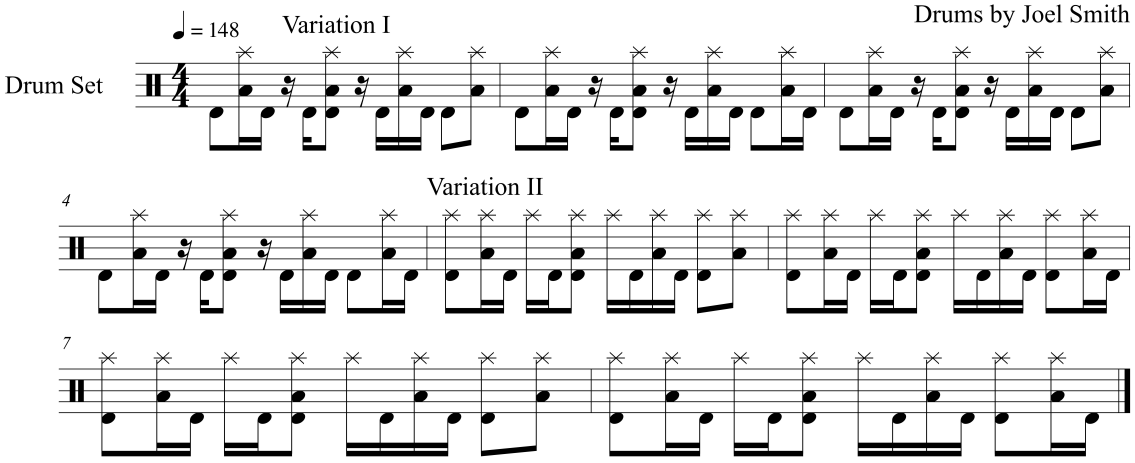

Figure 27. “Who Shall Separate Us” Transcription (1990)

[117] Walter Hawkins, *Love Alive IV*, (1990).

In the mid 1990s, the construction of shout music did not differentiate from previous decades. Songs followed similar progressions, tempo and format throughout, while continuing on the same drum pattern without any variation. Much of the shout music was recorded by chance; the shout music was not planned but once the emotions arose and the congregation rejoiced, the music was then performed and recorded. Hezekiah Walker's "Praise and Worship" (1994), "Praise Break" (1995), [118] and the end of Kirk Franklin's "Go Tell it on the Mountain"[119] (1995) are just three instances where shout music was recorded by chance.

In the early 2000s, artists began to create full songs inspired by shout music. Previous traditional shout music contained similar chord progressions throughout the entire song but in the 2000s, artists introduced more creativity with grand productions and implemented musical variations along with changes in drum patterns. Hezekiah Walker's *20/85 Experience*[120] album featured the song "Lift Him Up." The drummer, Jeff Lesley, featured three different variations of shout drumming patterns found in figure 28. Variation 1 contained alternating eighth notes between the bass drum and hi-hat, with off beat hits played on the snare drum. Variation 2 is similar to the first shout music variation played in figure 24, while variation 3 contained a two-beat feel with syncopated interaction on the hi-hat.

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[118] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *Live in Atlanta at Morehouse College*, (1994); *Live in New York (*1995).

[119] Kirk Franklin and the Family, *Christmas,* (Gospocentric Records, 1995), CD.

[120] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *20/85 Experience*, (Verity, 2005). CD.

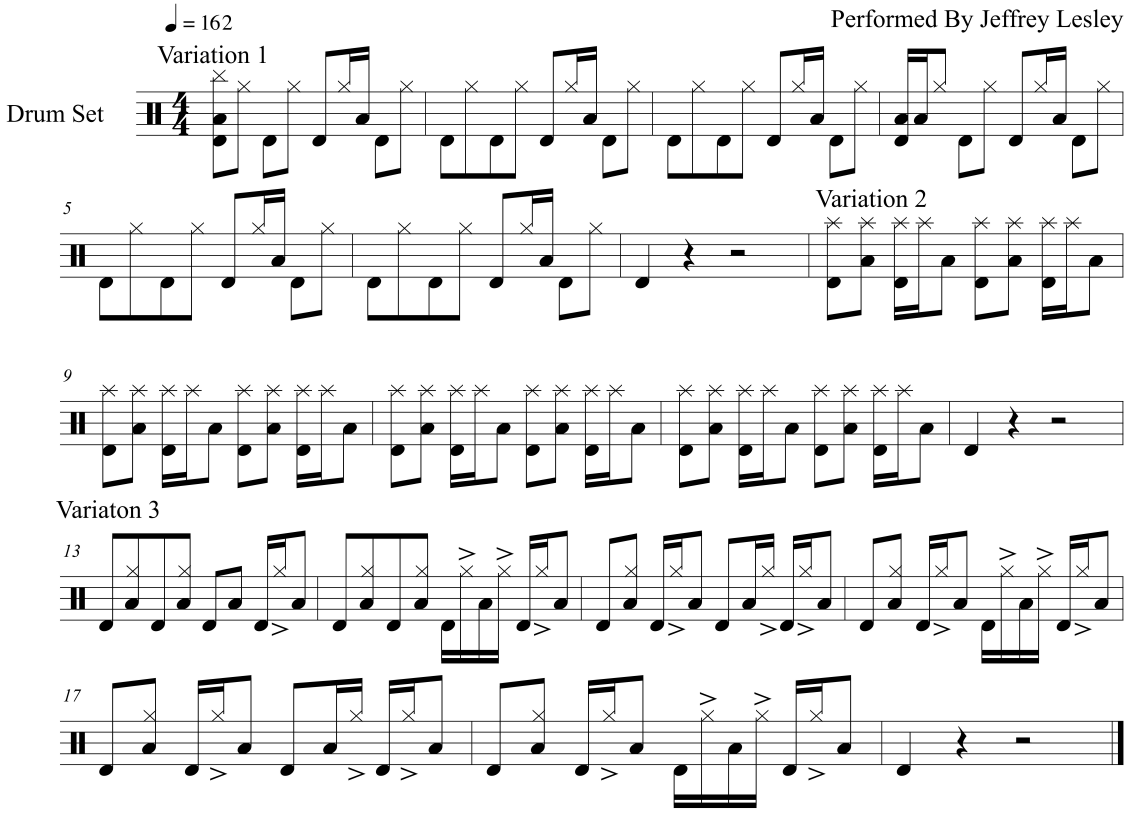

Figure 28. “Lift Him Up” Transcription (2005)

Tye Tribbett played an integral part in the construction and expansion of shout music as he began to place an emphasis on the arrangement of the shout music songs included on his albums. George “Spanky” McCurdy was featured on three of the Tye Tribbett first three albums, two of which included grand arrangements of shout music. McCurdy, a Philadelphia native, brought a creative interpretation of ghost notes, the use of toms, and off-beat patterns to shout music drumming. Tribbett’s 2006 album *Victory Live!*[121] featured the shout music arrangement of “I Still Have Joy.” McCurdy’s shout music variation found in figure 29 include the two-beat feel of previous shout

[121] Tye Tribbett & G.A, *Victory Live!* (2006).

transcriptions, but instead of using snare on the upbeat, he incorporated the china effects cymbal with syncopated rhythms being played on the floor tom, and ended the phrase with a linear fill. The crash and snare hits found in each measure coincide with the unison hits from the band.

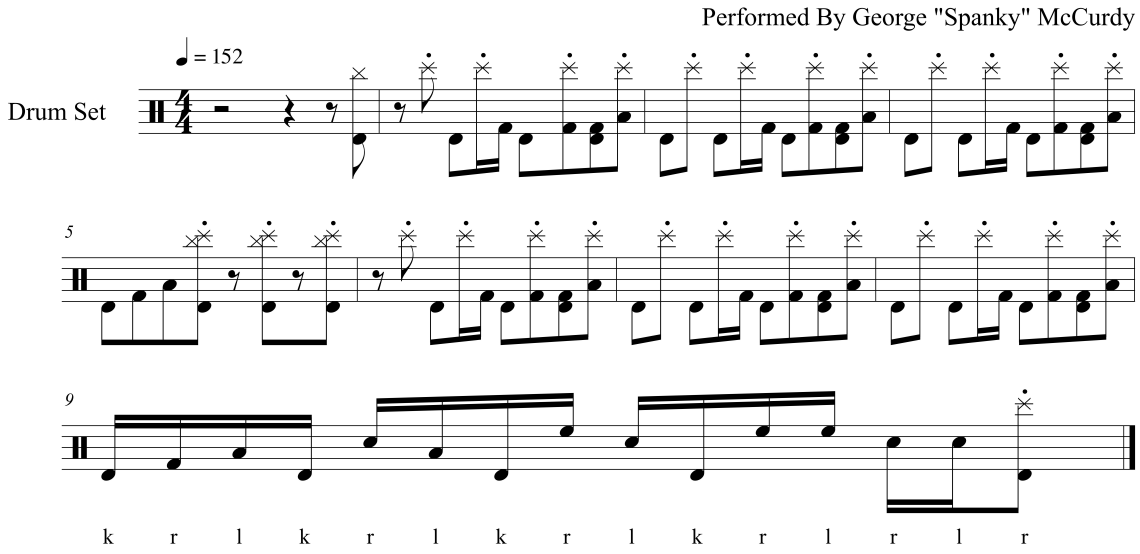

Figure 29. "I Still Have Joy" Transcription (2006)

The 2008 *Stand Out*[122] album from Tye Tribbett featured another large-scale shout music arrangement entitled *"*I Made it Through." With each change found in this musical production, McCurdy included a variation of drumming to heighten the intensity of the music. Figure 30 contains six different variations of shout-drumming rhythms performed within one song. Variation 1 included the cross stick being played on the snare and syncopated rhythms on the hi-hat, while variation 2 contained an upbeat pattern played on open and closed hi-hats, which alternates with the floor tom. Variation 3 was a

[122] Tye Tribbett & G.A, *Stand Out,* (2008).

mirror image of the first shout music drumming transcription found in figure 24 while variation 4 was played with open hi-hats and upbeat hits on the snare drums.

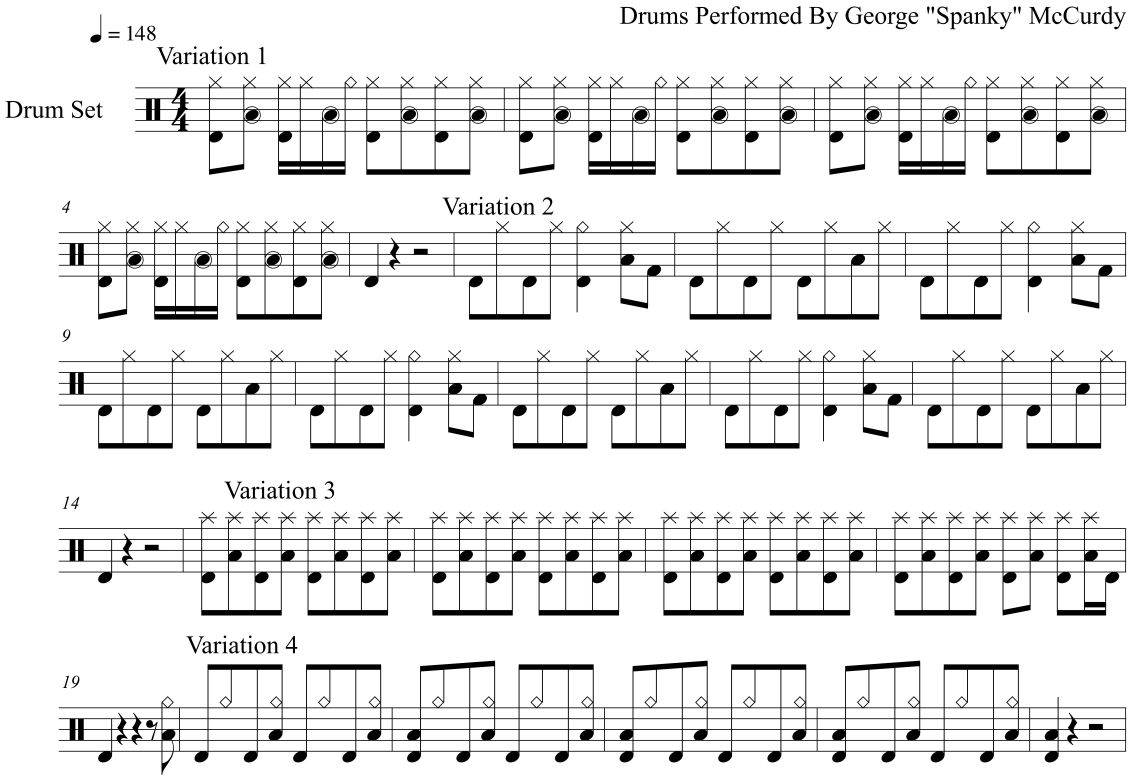

Figure 30. “I Made it Through” Transcription, Variations 1-4 (2008)

Variations 5 and 6 found in figure 31 featured a drumming style that has become a signature characteristic of McCurdy. Traditionally, the drum set was played with the right hand on the hi-hat and the left hand on the snare creating a cross between the sticks and hands. In this transcription, ghost notes were played with the right hand on the snare as the left hand moved to the hi-hat. This technique was known as playing open

handed.[123] The traditional two beat shout drumming was the foundation of the transcription, but the inclusion of open-handed playing and the ghost notes on the snare showcased an evolution to this style of drumming.

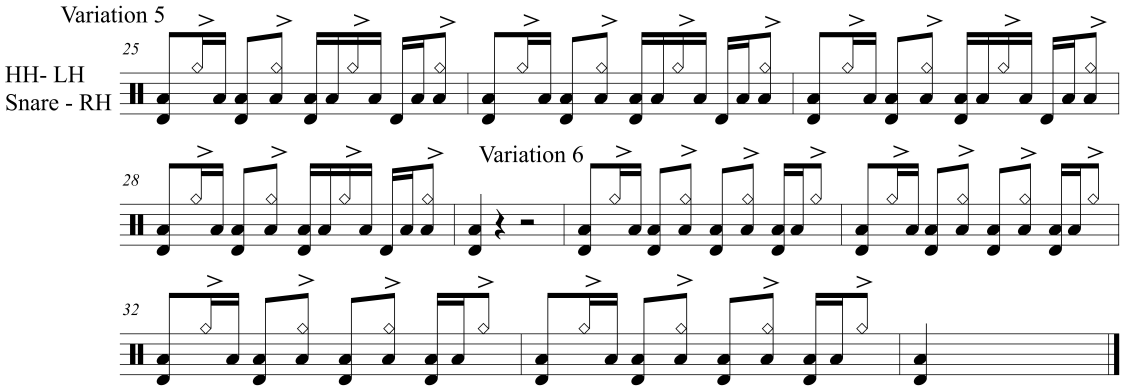

Figure 31. "I Made it Through" Transcription, Variations 5 and 6 (2008)

As gospel artists expanded the musical production of shout songs, drummers searched outside of gospel music to assist in the creativity within the style. Calvin Rodgers, inspired by Pop and Fusion drummer Keith Carlock, used a groove and back beat pattern for his drumming variations found on Byron Cage's "I Can't Hold it" from the 2009 *Faithful to Believe*[124] album. Figure 32 includes a simple two beat pattern that alternated snare drum and floor tom hits in variation 1, while variation 2 used a similar pattern interchanging strokes between the bass drum and open hi-hats. Variation 3 was the original two-beat shout music transcription found in figure 24 with the ride cymbal substituting the hi-hat voicing. Variation 4 used the Carlock-inspired groove as Rodgers

[123] Don Famularo and Claus Hessler, *Open-Handed Playing*, (2008).

[124] Byron Cage, *Faithful to Believe,* (Gospocentric Records, 2009), CD.

used the open hi-hat for the upbeat rhythms and syncopated snare drum notes to create more activity within the pattern. The back-beat pattern used in this transcription was unique as it created a different feel to the shout music; a groove within a groove. Prior to this pattern, the bass drum was consistently used on the downbeats of the measure, or beats 1 and 3. In this transcription, the bass drum generated a different pattern, similar to a funk groove, creating a new rhythmic idea that had not been previously performed in shout music.

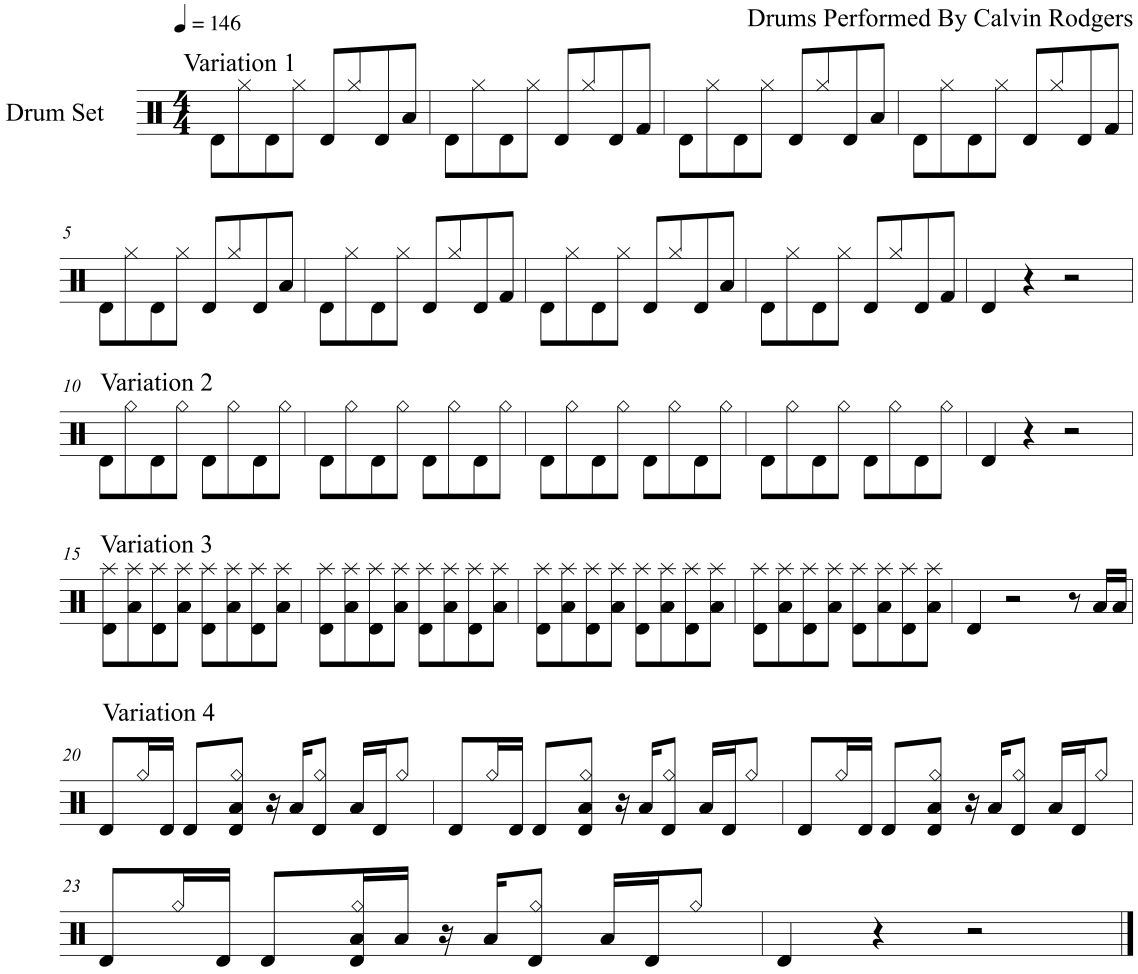

Figure 32. “I Can’t Hold It” Transcription (2009)

From the initial two-beat pattern to the syncopated rhythms, incorporation of ghost notes and open-handed playing, the drumming in shout music has evolved into a style of its own. It is now common during shed sessions for drummers to practice different fills, grooves and patterns to intensify the drumming in shout music. Adding syncopated rhythms such as a paradiddle-diddle (rlrrll) between the hi-hat and ride cymbal with the two beat pattern form variations that continue to expand the vocabulary found in gospel drumming.

Drum Solos, Musical Interludes and Reprise

The sole purpose of the band in gospel music was to establish a musical foundation that enhanced the lyrics of the song. Unless the arrangement called for aggressive play, most musicians remained in the pocket. As the musical compositions evolved, artists began to incorporate a reprise into their arrangements that allowed the musicians to display their musical skill without interrupting the cohesiveness of the song. Much of the early drumming in gospel music resembled the style of Clyde Stubblefield and John "Jabo" Starks who performed with James Brown: extreme discipline, dynamic musical touch, and feel.[125] The early gospel drummers remained in the pocket throughout the song and used their fills to accompany the melody of the tune. The musicality of the drummer was defined by their "feel" in a performance instead of the "fills" played during the performance. During live concerts, if the groove and feel of a song became encompassing and audience engaging, the artists would deviate from the original

[125] Nick Lauro, *"The Drummers of James Brown,"* The Drum Doctor (blog), September 24, 2014, http://www.thedrumdoctor.net/inspired/the-drummers-of-james-brown.

arrangement of a tune and allow the chord progressions to repeat, thus creating the reprise. One of the first recorded instances of a reprise occurred after the song "Changed" from the Walter Hawkins *Love Alive*[126] album, released in 1975. In addition, the title track from Hezekiah Walker's *I'll Make It*[127] album, released in 1986, featured an unmarked reprise with progressive drumming from Jeff "Lo" Davis. The recorded length of the song was 6:31, but the structured composition ended at the 4:10 mark. Known for having a fast kick drum technique, Davis performed a sixteenth-note fill on the bass drum transcribed in figure 33. This rapid succession of notes was traditionally found in rock drumming with a double pedal using both feet, but Davis amazingly performed this with one.

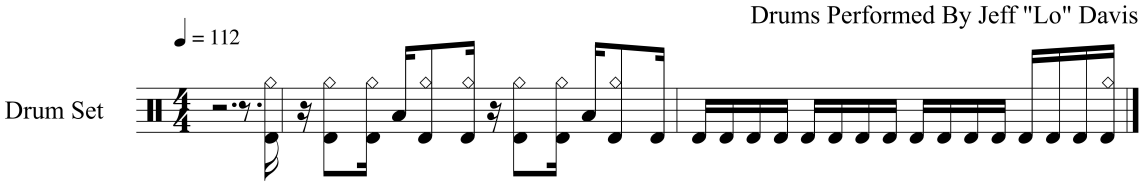

Figure 33. "I'll Make It" Transcription (1986)

As musical compositions continued to become more complex and intricate, artists began to allow for the skill of musicians to be showcased through short musical breaks such as Davis' break in figure 33. The drummer would use these few measures to insert new ideas, techniques and fills within his repertoire. In 1990, Walter Hawkins released

[126] Walter Hawkins, *Love Alive I* (1975).

[127] Hezekiah Walker and the Love Fellowship Crusade Choir, *I'll Make It* (1986).

the *Love Alive IV*[128] album with the song "Thank You Lord" that featured one of the first recorded drum solos from Joel Smith. His inclusion of ghost notes, use of the bass drum as the dominant voice in figure 34 was an early indication of how the drumming in gospel music would become more active and involved within the compositions.

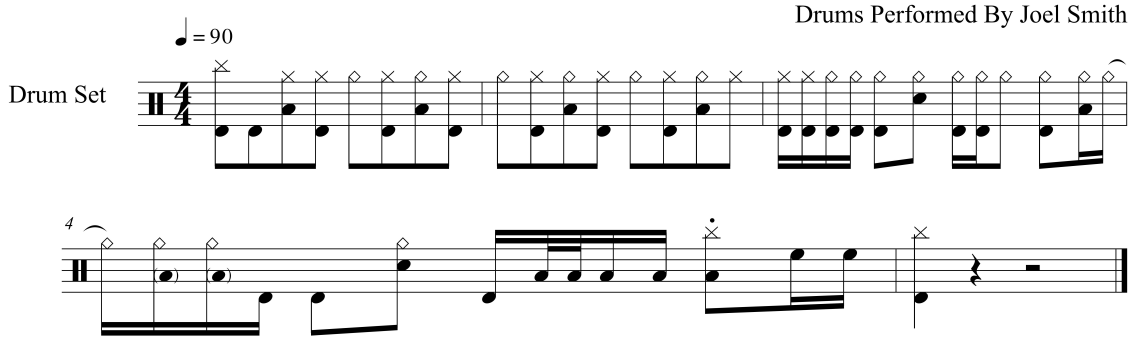

Figure 34. "Thank You Lord" Transcription (1990)

Drum breaks and solos were commonly found during the early 1990s as artist began to acquire drummers with the skill to perform them. As discussed during the *Drum and Song Introductions* section, drum solos were being placed at the beginning of songs as an energetic lead into worship.

[128] Walter Hawkins, *Love Alive IV,* (1990).

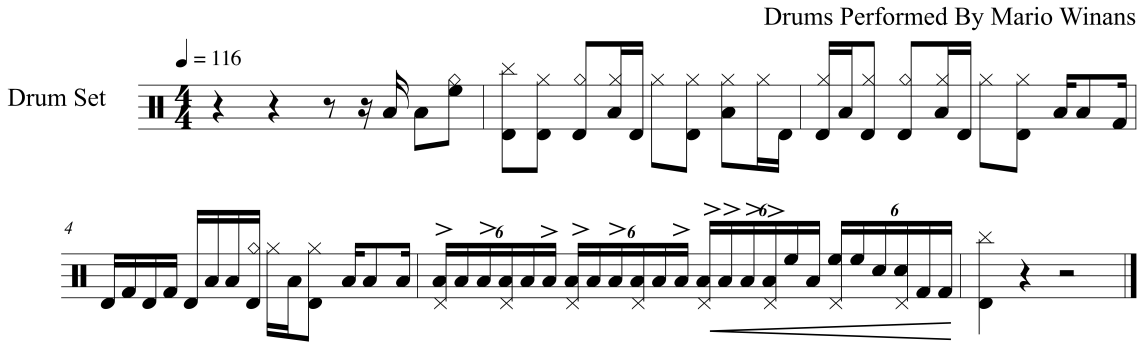

Figure 35. "Now Are We" Transcription (1992)

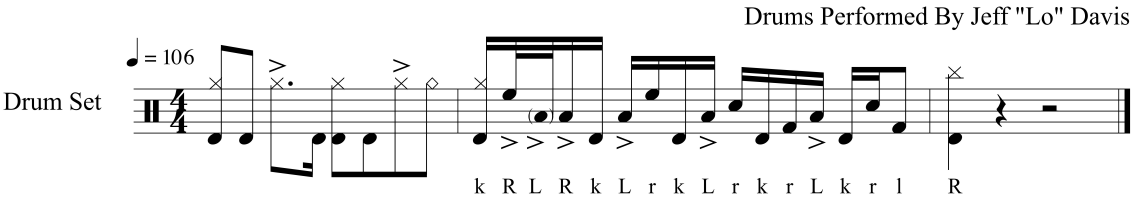

Figure 36. "King of Glory" Transcription (1995)

During the mid 1990s, there was a distinct shift in the progression of contemporary gospel drumming. Not only were the compositions of gospel music becoming advanced, but the creativity and skill of the drummers grew as well. In 1996, the Inner City Mass Choir released the album *Heaven*[129], which featured the song "God of Mercy." This composition called for seven, two-measure drum solo breaks during the vamp section. LaDell Abrams began the solo in figure 37 with a backbeat on the snare drum and constant eight notes on the hi-hat. The bass drum was primarily used as the solo voice until measure 7, when Abrams performed a descending motive between the toms, snare drum, bass drum and splash cymbal.

[129] Inner City Mass Choir, *Heaven,* (1996).

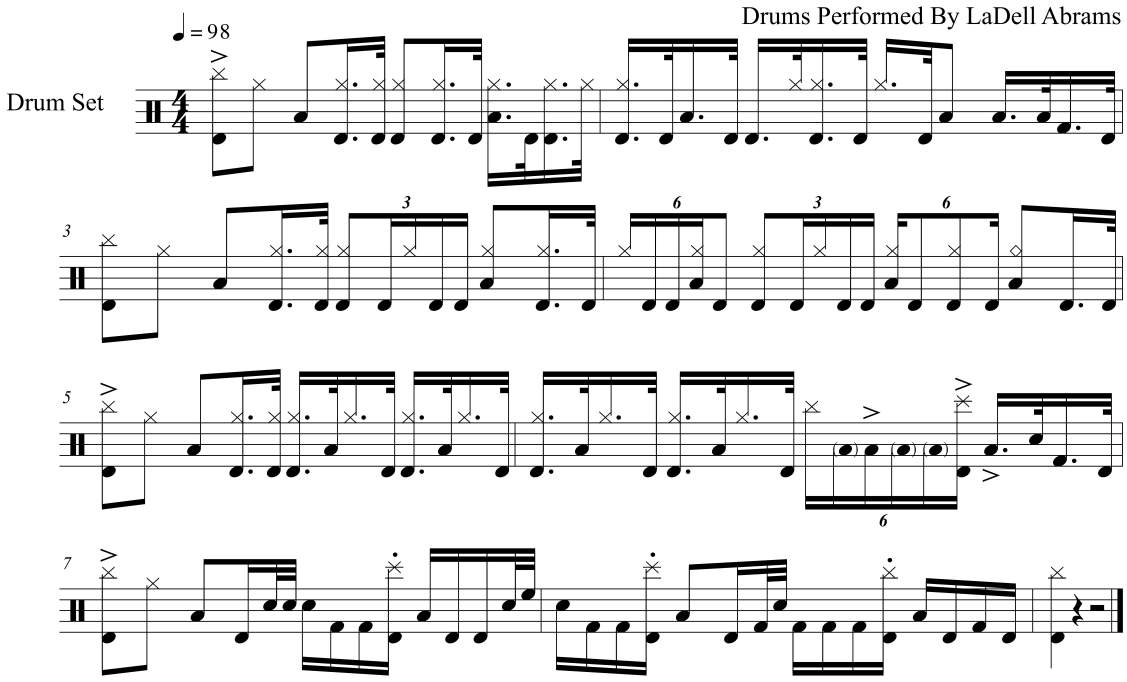

Figure 37. "God of Mercy" Transcription (1996)

As musical interludes became more frequent in gospel music, drum solos began to incorporate new rhythmic techniques by how they were performed. Kim Burrell's jazz influence brought about a musical interjection into gospel music and her early albums contained reprises and musical instrumentals that had not been featured before. These compositions allowed for the musical freedom of the musicians to be displayed without interrupting the chemistry of the lyrics and vocal production of the songs. In 1997, Chris Dave's performance on the title track reprise of the *Try Me Again*[130] album featured a beat displacement, double-paradiddle pattern that was similar to the phase shifting technique found in minimalism compositions.

[130] Kim Burrell, *Try Me Again*, (1997).

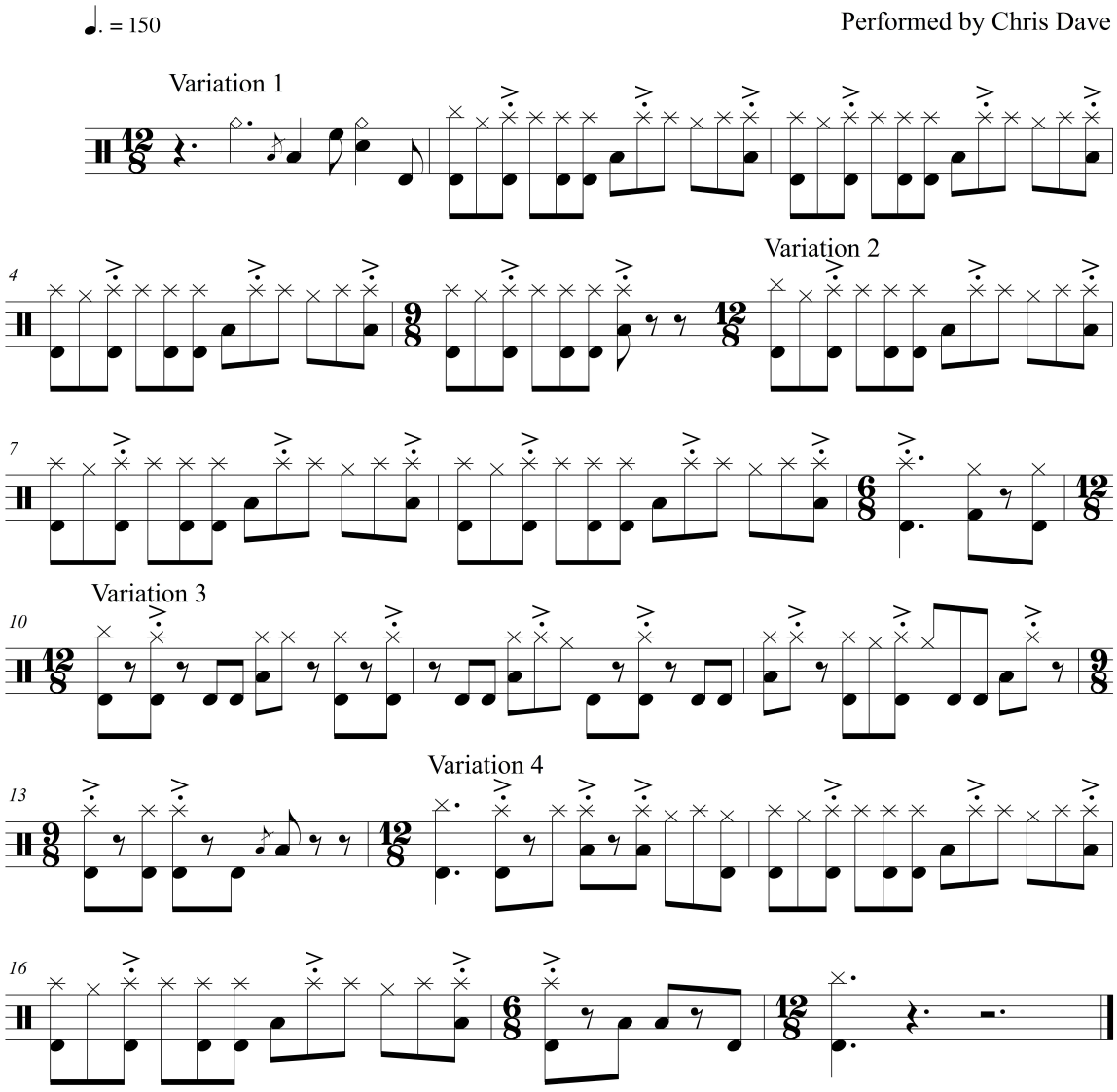

Figure 38. "Try Me Again" Reprise Transcription (1997)

Popularized by the minimalist composer Steve Reich, phase shifting used a repeating rhythm and moved the pattern over one beat within the time signature.[131] The transcription in figure 38 begins with a 12/8 time signature and interjects a 9/8 time

[131] J. Colannino, F. Gomez and G.T. Toussaint, Analysis of emergent beat class sets in Steve Reich's *Clapping Music* and the *Yoruba* bell timeline, *Perspective of New Music, (*2009): 113.

signature in measure 5. If the 12/8 time signature continued, the shifting would be evident in the variation found in measures 1, 7, 10, and 14. The double-paradiddle pattern is played with the right hand ride cymbal and bass drum combination while the left hand played the snare.

While Chris Dave performed advanced rhythmic techniques with Kim Burrell, Ray Bady continued to expand gospel drum solos with patterns used from earlier years. Marvin Sapp's title track from the 1997 *Grace and Mercy*[132] album featured a drum solo from Bady found in figure 39. The inclusion of linear fills found in measures 4 and 8 were now becoming standard traits of gospel drumming. The Brooklyn-based fills found in measures 12 and 16 were techniques that continued to evolve from the previous decade.

[132] Sapp, Marvin, *Grace and Mercy,* (World Entertainment, 2007), CD.

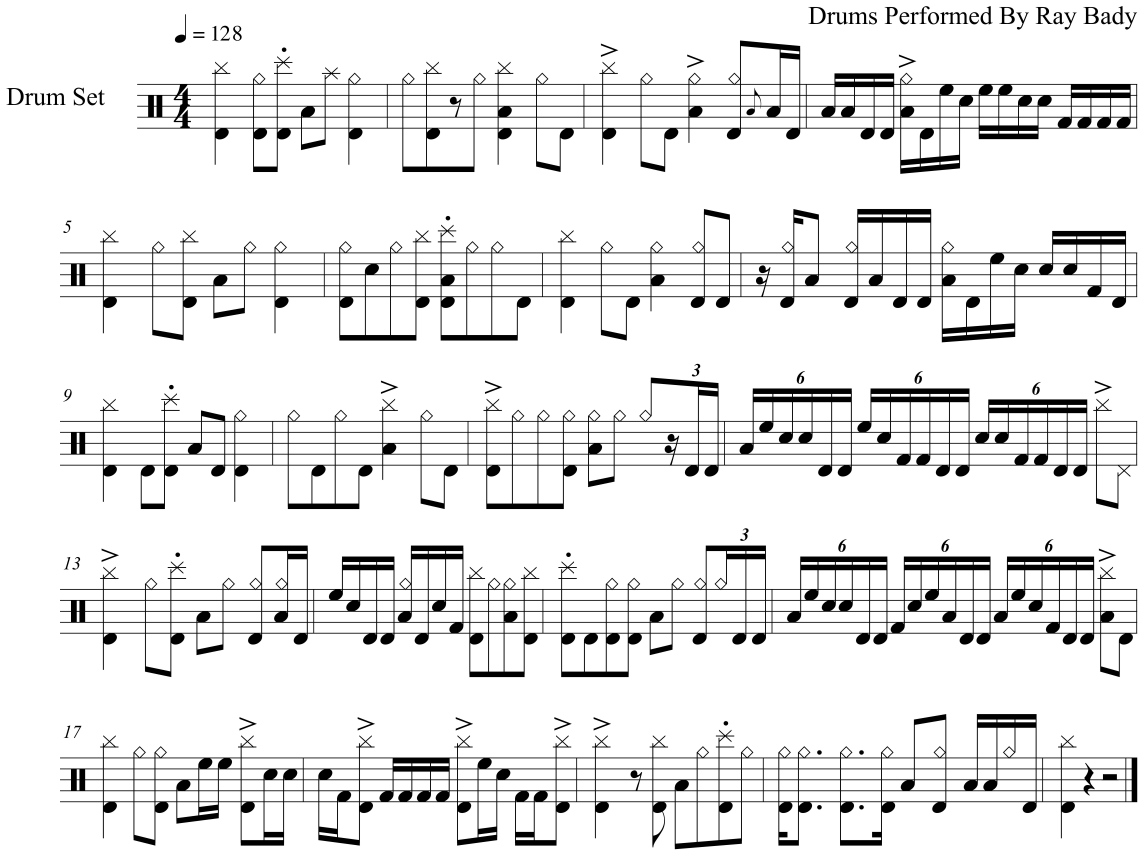

Figure 39. “Grace and Mercy” Transcription (1997)

The instrumental “Tribute” from Kim Burrell’s 1998 album *Everlasting Life,*[133] featured solos from the bass guitar, Rhodes keyboard, lead guitar, saxophone and drum set. The solo, performed by Doobie Powell and transcribed in figure 40, differed from previous solos with simplistic introductory fills of singular voicing. The notes were separated from each other before Powell exploded into Brooklyn inspired rolls around the drum set.

[133] Kim Burrell, *Everlasting Life*, (Tommy Boy Records, 1998), CD.

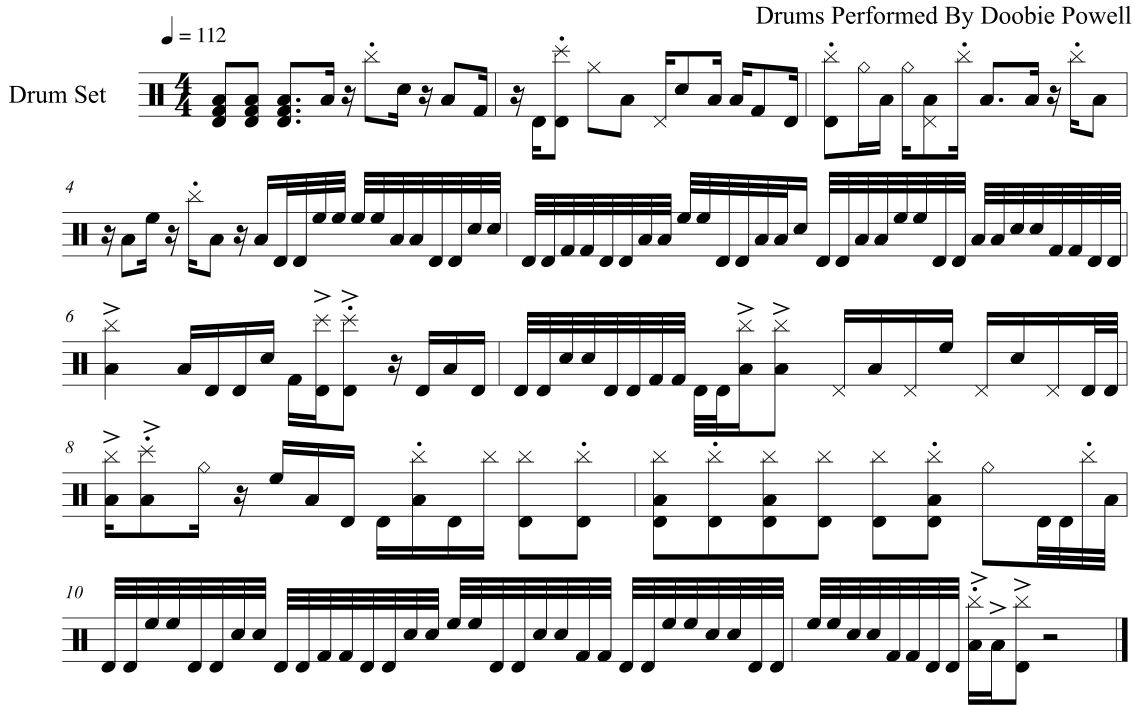

Figure 40. “Tribute” Transcription (1998)

John P. Kee was the featured artist and songwriter on the song “God of Mercy”[134] by the Inner City Mass Choir in 1996. In 2000, Kee recorded a remixed version entitled “Rain on Us” performed by Calvin Rodgers, which included two elongated solos recorded live on the *Not Guilty…The Experience*[135] album. Rodgers began the solo with similar voicings between the hi-hat, snare drum and bass drum as the previous Abrams solo, but deviated from the original performance by increasing the rate of speed and the amount of notes performed with sextuplet fills and thirty-second note patterns. The linear fill was used throughout the solo and the expansion of the Brooklyn fills can be found in the final measures as well. The use of triple-metered fills and ghost notes have become a

[134] Inner City Mass Choir, *Heaven,* (1996).

[135] John P. Kee and the New Life Community Choir, *Not Guilty* (2000).

distinct characteristic of Rodgers playing and were constantly used in his performances. Figure 41 contains the first half of the elongated solo.

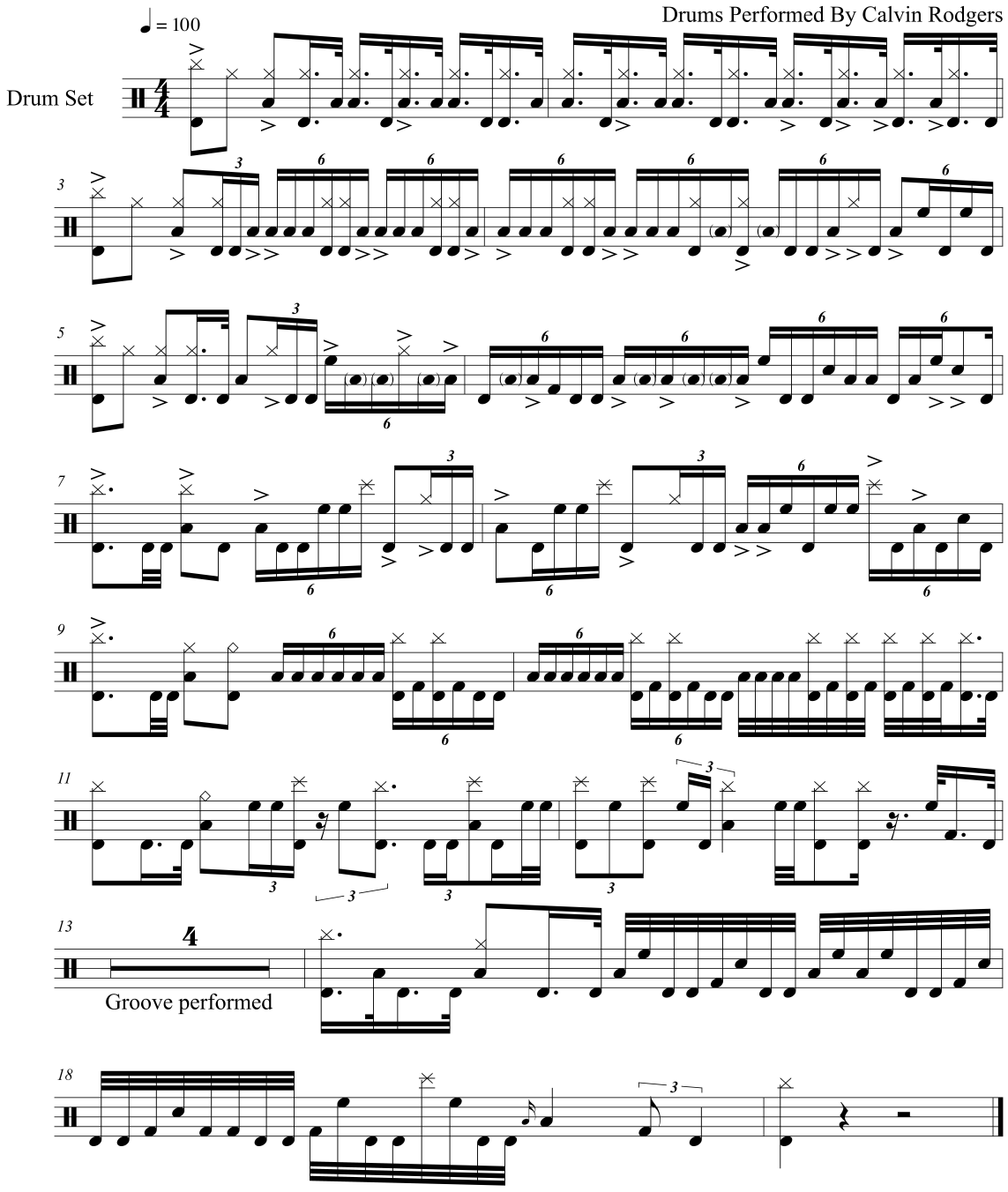

Figure 41. “Rain on Us” Transcription (2000)

The rate of speed with the notes used and the interaction between the hi-hat, snare drum, and toms continued to increase with each progressive solo within gospel drumming. The opening solo in "I'll Keep Holding On"[136] previously discussed in the *Song and Drum Introduction* section, was a display of swift hi-hat, bass drum and snare interaction with the ascending and descending tom patterns.

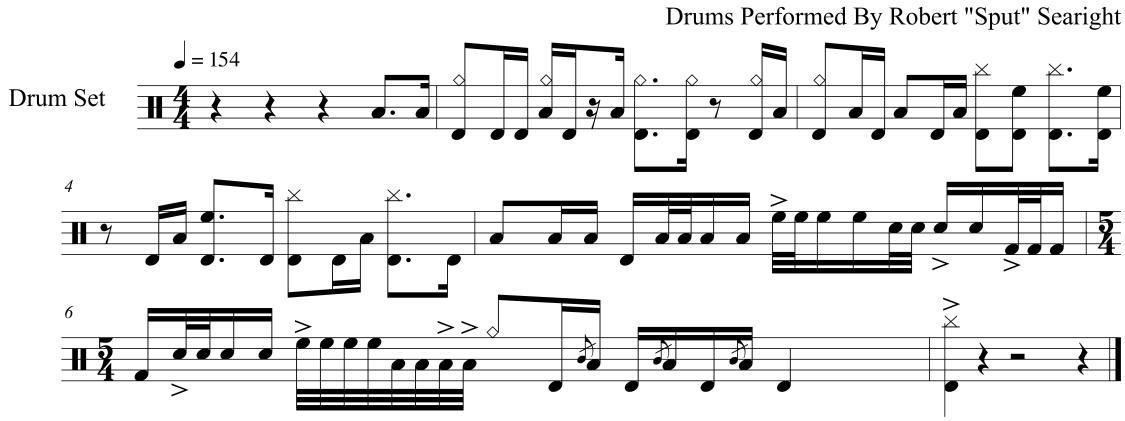

Figure 42. "I'll Keep Holding On" Transcription (2001)

With compositions, concerts and recording converting into such grand events, the use of musical interludes was slowly becoming a standard for gospel music. Israel and New Breed featured the interlude "Minstrel's Advance" composed by Aaron Lindsey on the 2004 recording of *Live from Another Level*[137] that included solos from the lead guitar, electric keyboard, piano and drum set. The elongated solo by Chris Coleman transcribed in figure 43, displayed five solo passages that included thirty-second note patterns around the drum set and expanded techniques by playing the bass drum with a stick as well as

[136] Kim Burrell, *Live in Concert,* (Elektra Records, 2001), CD.

[137] Israel Houghton and New Breed, Live from Another Level, (Integrity Media, 2004), CD.

the pedal. “Minstrel’s Advance” only appears on the DVD version of *Live from Another Level*[138] and not the CD recording, but a clip of the solo was found on YouTube®.[139]

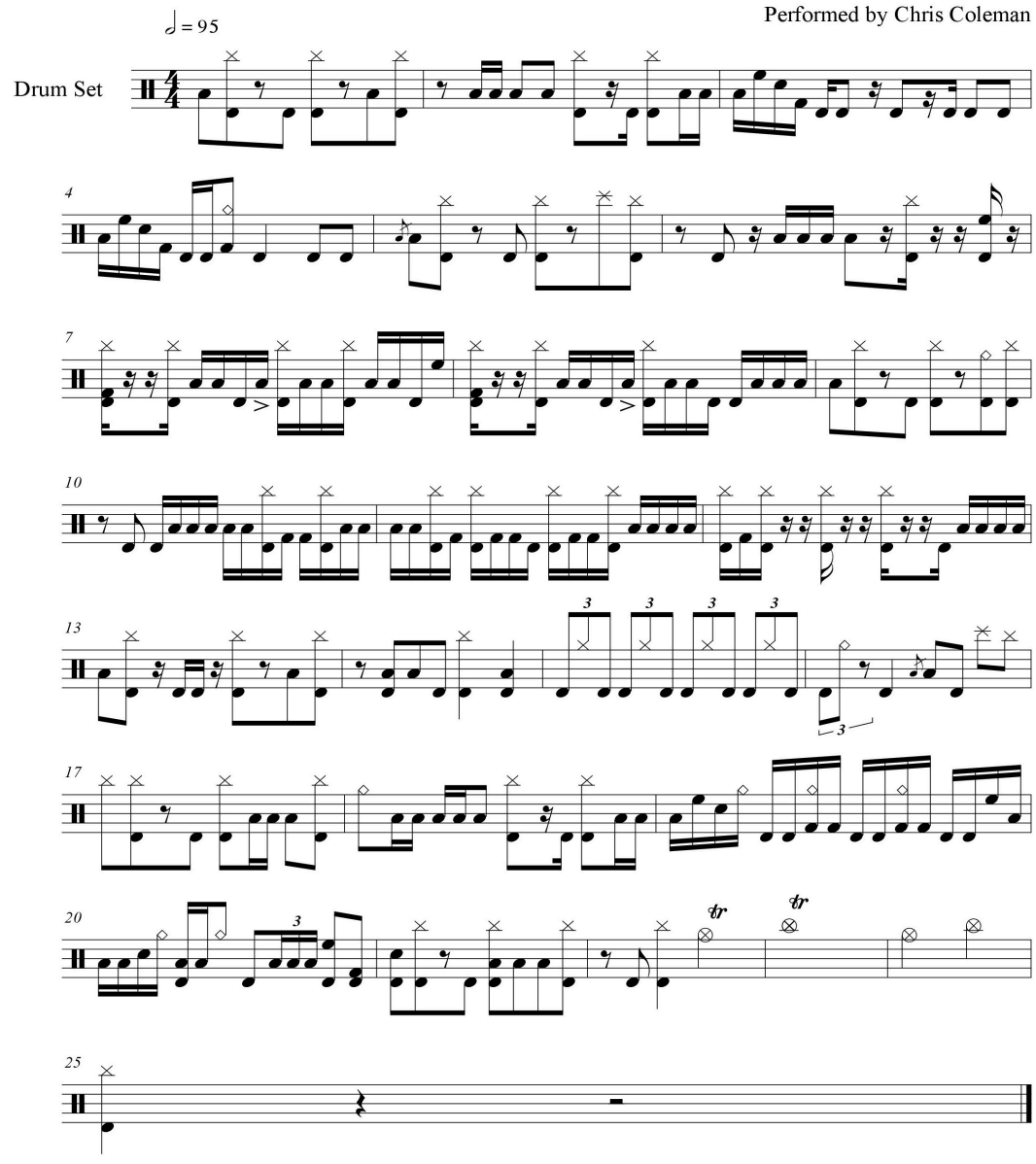

Figure 43. “Minstrel’s Advance” Instrumental Transcription (2004)

[138] Israel Houghton and New Breed, *Live from Another Level* (Sony Studios, 2004), DVD.

[139] Chris Coleman, *Israel and New Breed-Minstrel’s Advance,* March 6, 2009, video recording, 2:22, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kayymBeDgww.

As styles and techniques progressed, the drumming within the solos followed along with the trend. The 2008 *Right Now Praise*[140] album from Jonathon Nelson included a drum solo on the song "Bettah." Previous drum solos were based around linear fills and intricate rhythms but the solo from Mike Reid contained a constant pulse on the bass drum. By keeping this pulse in figure 44, Reid was not able to play the intricate linear fills. Instead, he began to create a triple metered swing feel by performing triplet and sextuplet patterns in the duple meter of 4/4.

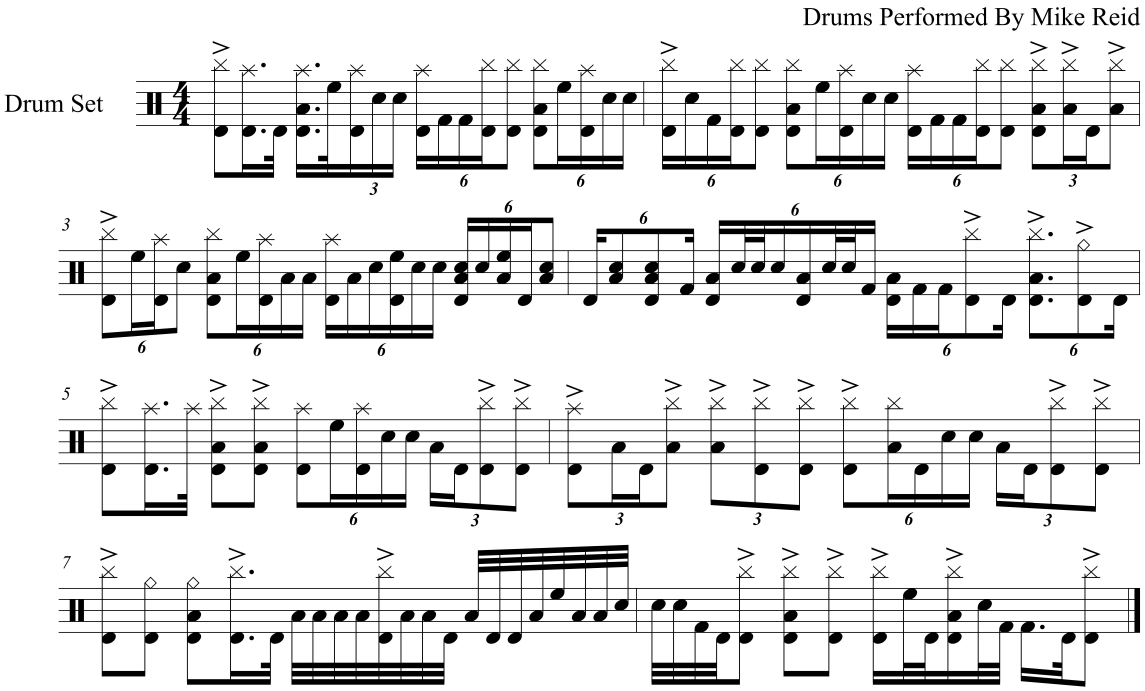

Figure 44. "Bettah" Transcription (2008)

Throughout the early 2000s, the style of gospel drumming progressed by adapting various characteristics such as the increase in speed, linear fills, and the expansion of

[140] Jonathan Nelson, *Right Now Praise* (2008).

solos. Calvin Rodgers played an integral part in the development of drum solos as he is continuously featured as the soloist on gospel albums. Rodgers appeared on his second consecutive Marvin Sapp album entitled *Here I Am*[141] in 2010. The closing track, "More Than a Conqueror," not only ended the album, but the drum solo during the last 1:20 from Rodgers also ended the live concert.

[141] Marvin Sapp, *Here I Am* (2010).

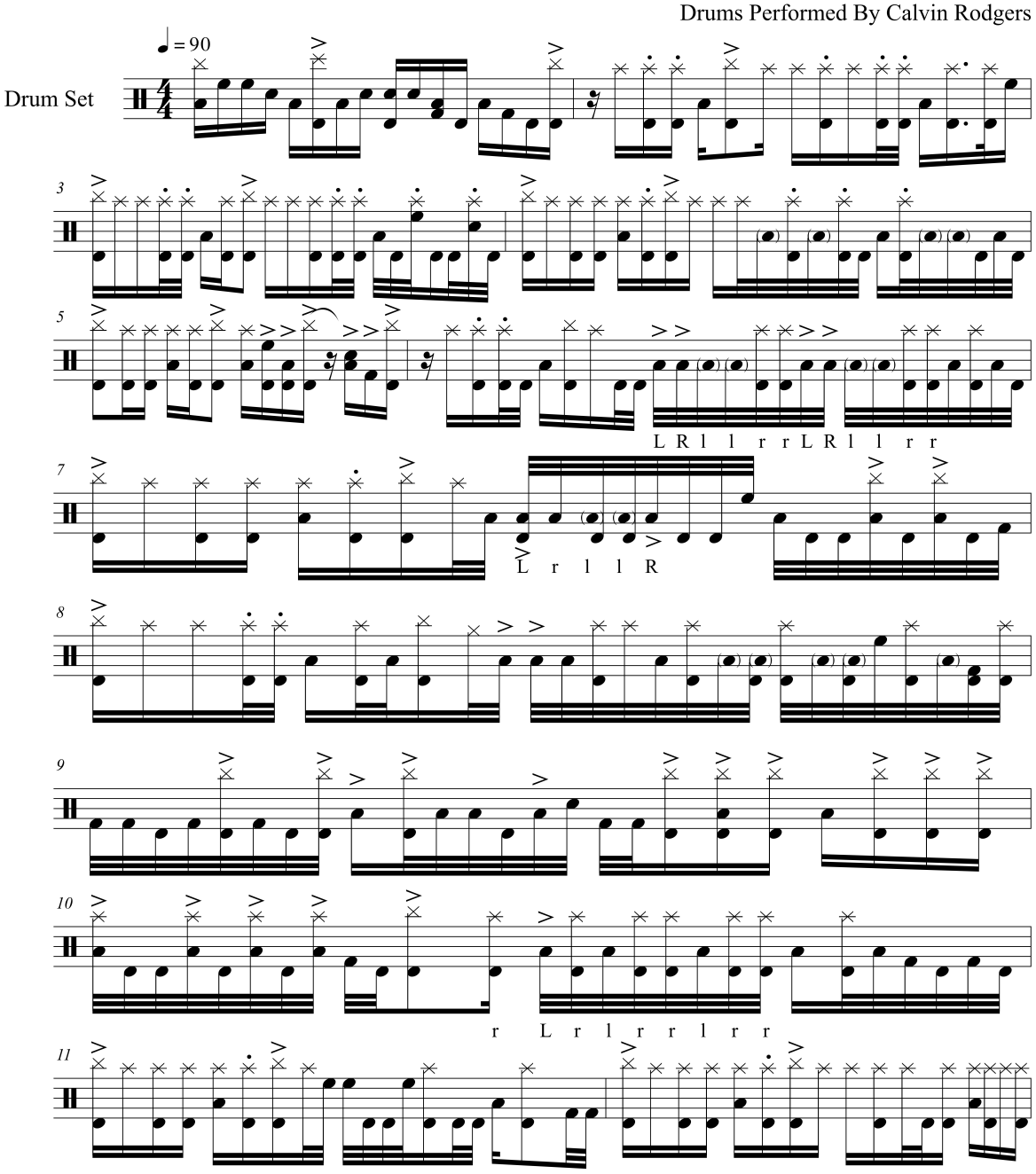

Figure 45a. “More Than a Conqueror” (mm. 1-12) Transcription (2010)

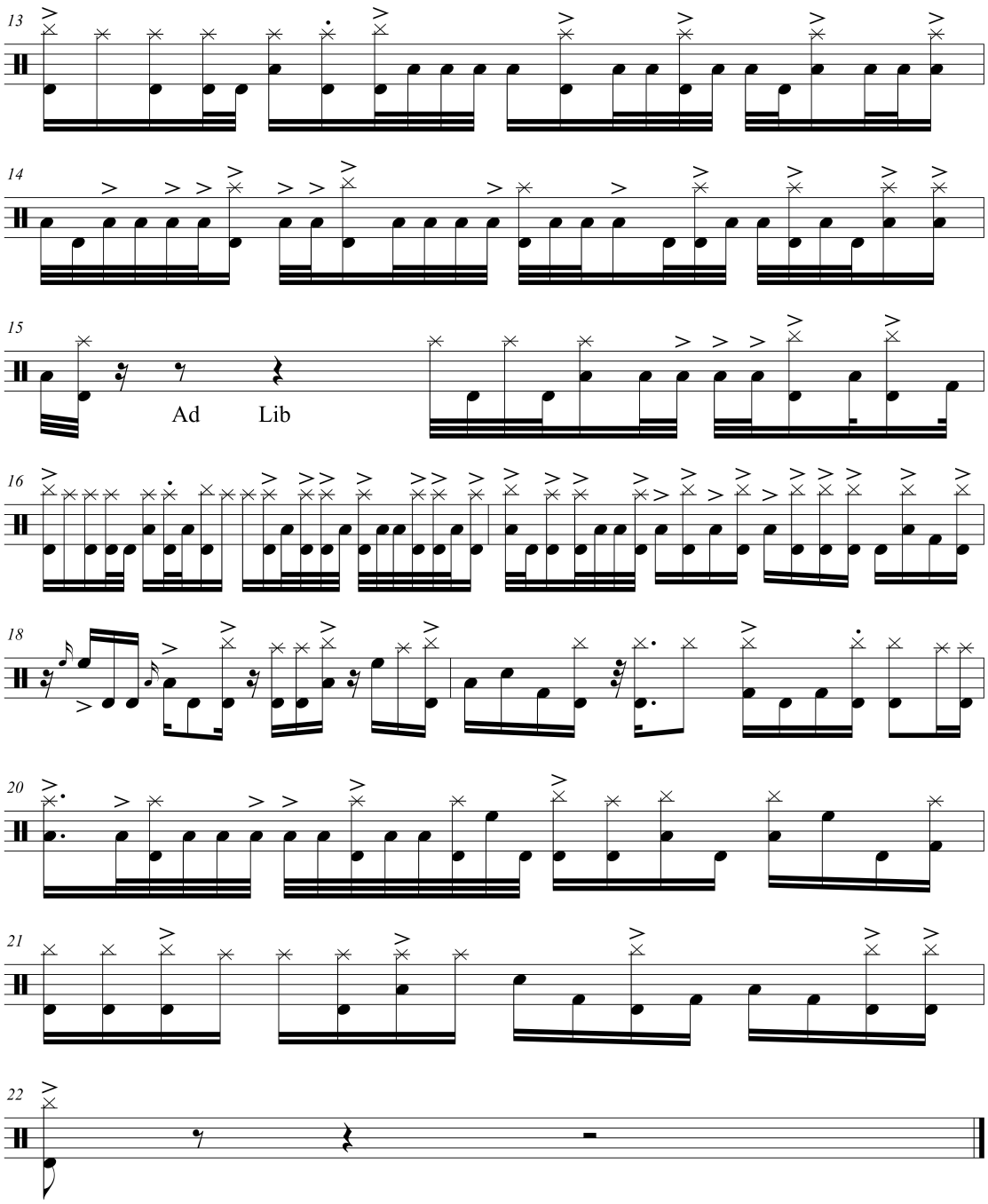

Figure 45b. “More Than a Conqueror” (mm.13-22) Transcription (2010)

The techniques common to gospel drumming as demonstrated by Rodgers are in full display in figures 42a and 42b. The development of rudimental patterns such as the

paradiddle and paradiddle-diddle found in measures 6, 7, and 10 were not performed at this rate of speed in previous eras, but the skill of drummers at this time enabled them to perform the fills and patterns at this tempo. The combination of the right hand on the bell and ride cymbal with the bass drum enhanced the accents of the paradiddle pattern and served as the foundation of this solo. The use of a paradiddle-diddle was also the foundation of a progressive Rodgers solo that was previously discussed in the *Drum and Song Introduction* section in figure 15. The solo in James Fortune's "Never Again"[142] was the first of its kind to feature such a fast succession of notes to begin a song. The passage included two of the notable characteristics now common to gospel drumming: increased speed and linear fills.

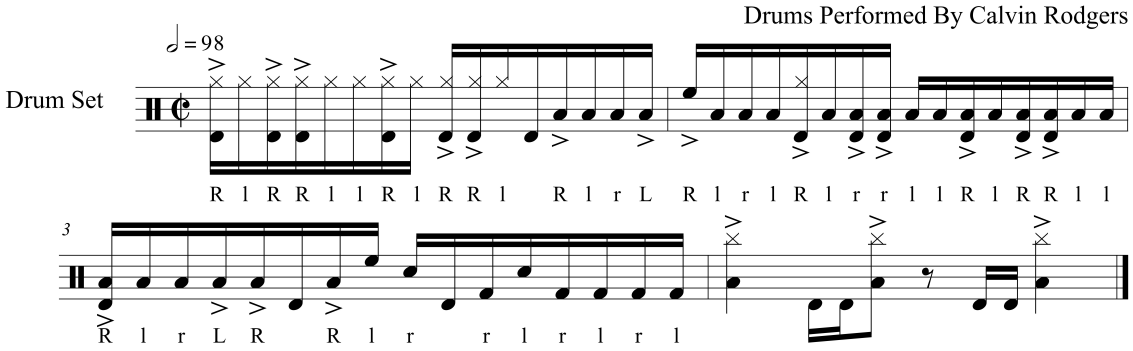

Figure 46. "Never Again" Transcription (2012)

Solo features within gospel drumming have evolved from short, transitional fills to elongated virtuosic performances. The musicianship displayed during interludes and reprises enabled the gospel drummer to demonstrate fills that were not accepted in early gospel music. It is this show of musicianship that has garnered the interest of mainstream

[142] James Fortune, *Identity*, (2012).

artists to employ the services of gospel drummers as the driving force of their bands. Tables 2 contains a list of notable musical interludes and reprises, and Table 3 includes a list of notable drum solos.

Table 2. List of Notable Musical Interludes and Reprises

Year	Song	Artist	Album	Drummer
1975	Changed (Reprise)	Walter Hawkins	*Love Alive*	Joel Smith
1991	Please You More (Instrumental)	Commissioned	*Album 7*	Michael Williams
1994	I Will Go In Jesus Name (Reprise)	Hezekiah Walker	*Live at Morehouse*	Jason Hendricks
1997	Try Me Again (Reprise)	Kim Burrell	*Try Me Again*	Chris Dave
1998	Kim's Request (Interlude)	Kim Burrell	*Everlasting Life*	Alex Ward
1998	Prodigal Son (Reprise)	Kim Burrell	*Everlasting Life*	Doobie Powell
1998	Tribute (Instrumental)	Kim Burrell	*Everlasting Life*	Doobie Powell
2002	Triumphant Entry (Instrumental)	Commissioned	*Reunion Live*	Michael Williams
2004	Minstrel's Advance	Israel and New Breed	*Live From Another Level*	Chris Coleman
2006	Bonus: Band Jam	New Direction	*Send the Praise*	Jeral "Scooter" Gray, Jr.
2010	Instrumental	James Fortune and FIYA	*Encore*	George "Spanky" McCurdy
2012	The Overture	James Fortune and FIYA	*Identity*	Mike Reid

Table 3. List of Notable Drum Solos

Year	Song	Artist	Album	Drummer
1990	Thank You Lord	Walter Hawkins	*Love Alive III*	Joel Smith
1992	Now Are We	Marvin Winans	*Marvin Winans Introducing Perfect Praise*	Mario Winans
1995	King of Glory	James Hall	*King of Glory*	Jeff "Lo" Davis
1995	I'll Be Satisfied	Hezekiah Walker	*Live in New York: By Any Means Necessary*	Jason Hendricks
1996	God of Mercy	Inner City Mass Choir ft. John P. Kee	*Heaven*	LaDell Abrams
1998	Glory to Glory	Fred Hammond	*Pages of Life: Chapters 1 & 2*	Marvin McQuitty
2000	Rain on Us	John P. Kee	*Not Guilty… Experience*	Calvin Rodgers
2000	Praise Him	Gideon Band	*The Experience*	Aaron Spears
2001	Tell the Devil I'm Back	Bishop Larry Trotter	*Tell The Devil I'm Back*	Calvin Rodgers
2001	I'll Keep Holding On	Kim Burrell	*Kim Burrell Live*	Robert "Sput" Searight
2004	Minstrel's Advance	Israel and New Breed	*Live From Another Level*	Chris Coleman
2006	Bonus: Band Jam	New Direction	*Send the Praise*	Jeral "Scooter" Gray, Jr.
2008	Bettah	Jonathan Nelson	*Right Now Praise*	Mike Reid
2010	More Than a Conqueror	Marvin Sapp	*Here I Am*	Calvin Rodgers
2012	Never Again	James Fortune and FIYA	*Identity*	Calvin Rodgers

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Summary

The purpose of this dissertation was to trace the evolution of contemporary gospel drumming and to disclose how the style has transitioned into the current model. The study was animated by four research questions that focused the attention to data specific to the growth in style, technique, and virtuosity.

Through the study of listening examples, the progression of both gospel music and drumming was examined from the years 1968 through 2012, which was presented in Chapter II. Six professional musicians were selected to participate in this study because of their backgrounds in gospel drumming. These musicians were chosen because of their experience in performing with both gospel and mainstream performers. Artists who had professional experience in both areas were specifically selected to gather information on the similarities of the styles in an effort to gain an understanding of their formative gospel training. The primary sources used in the data collection process were semi-structured interviews and document review. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted via telephone, Skype® and Facetime® with the interviews lasting between 45-90 minutes, depending on the participants' response to the interview questions, which can be found in Chapter III. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, data were collected through previously published articles and video sources. By analyzing examples, the

evolution of contemporary gospel drumming was categorized by song and drum introductions, Brooklyn fills, shout music, and drum solos, musical interludes and reprises, which was presented in Chapter 4 of this study.

Conclusions

As a result of thorough analysis of the listening examples and the data collected through semi-structured interviews, several conclusions can be derived. They are as follows: (1) The evolution of contemporary gospel drumming is a result of heightened technical ability, influence and changes within gospel music, (2) the formative training in gospel drumming exposes young musicians to various genres of music and harnessed the ability for adaptation to various genres, (3) although the contemporary gospel drummer is equipped with technical and musical skills, the implementation and maturity of the young artists needs to be addressed, and (4) gospel drumming is becoming a highly sought after style of performance and gradually becoming accepted within the drumming community.

The Evolution of contemporary gospel drumming is a result of raised technical ability, influence and changes within gospel music.

The evolution of contemporary gospel drumming is just as Daniel Glass stated: "It's in music."[143] As the music of the decades evolved, so did the drumming that supported the performances. With new ideas of composition and the acceptance of musical liberties, musicians began to include various fills and patterns originated from performers outside of gospel music. Drummers began to implement fills with increased speed and non-traditional placement, which inspired younger musicians to reciprocate

[143] Daniel Glass in conversation with the author, November 2012.

what they observed. The inspiration gained from the musicians and performers outside of gospel in the previous decades are now found within the genre. The level for drumming performance was raised with each new idea recorded in gospel music.

The formative training in gospel drumming exposes young musicians to various genres of music and adaptation to various genres.

As young drummers begin their careers in gospel music, they are exposed to various styles without their cognitive knowledge. With the constant variations in musical selections and impromptu situations, gospel drummers were placed in positions where they were forced to adapt and excel. The exposure to these situations in their formative years has prepared today's gospel drummer to succeed when faced with unforeseen situations in their professional career.

Although today's gospel drummer is equipped with technical and musical skill, the implementation and maturity of the young artists needs to be addressed.

The ability required to perform linear fills associated with having "gospel chops" has raised the level of playing amongst the majority of gospel drummers. Many of these drummers are younger, faster, and more advanced than performers twice their age. The problem arises when these amateur musicians are not properly trained about the professionalism that is required to become a respected drummer in the industry. Experience is associated with maturity and it is recommended that the amateur gospel drummer search for quality experiences to aid in their maturity and development. The need for mentorship and fundamental music education are sources needed to assist the young musicians.

Gospel drumming is becoming a highly sought after style of performance and gradually becoming accepted within the drumming community.

Many of today's leading artists in pop, R&B, and various other contemporary styles employ drummers who have formative training in gospel music. Artists such as Lady Gaga, Usher, Justin Timberlake and Jay-Z all use the services of musicians who rose through the ranks as young gospel drummers. Stick companies like Vater and Vic Firth have recently created "gospel" sticks and cymbal companies such as Soultone, Sabian and Zildjian have released "praise" and "inspirational" packs which cater to gospel drummers. Sites like drummerword.com have updated their webpages to feature categories of gospel drummers and vicfirth.com now features weekly drum shed sessions where amateur drummers can load play-a-long tracks and perform with leading gospel drummers like Gerald Heyward. Music conventions such as the Percussive Arts Society International Convention and NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants) now host clinics and showcases for gospel drummers to formally instruct others of the style. These efforts reflect the rise in acceptance and notoriety of gospel drumming.

Implications for Future Research

As a result of the findings and data received, three main subjects have proven to be areas of interest for future research: (1) Joel Smith, (2) Calvin Rodgers, and (3) The lack of formal education within the gospel drumming community.

With each of the participants stating that Joel Smith served as a major influence in their playing, the idea of uncovering his formative training and experiences in early

gospel music could prove helpful to those who are interested in the history of gospel drumming.

As a trailblazer for contemporary gospel drumming, Calvin Rodgers is arguably the most sought after musician in today's gospel music. Detailing Rodgers progression through gospel music from a rising musician to now being employed as a music director and producer, valuable information can be attained through the research of Rodgers' career.

There is truly a lack of talented musicians attending college and receiving degrees in music whose primary training took place within the church sanctuary. Many of these musicians purse professional careers without the any academic instruction and training. Uncovering reasons why drummers are choosing not to attend college is a topic of great interest for future research.

Final Reflection

As this study concludes, the search to uncover the evolution of gospel drumming revealed the need for a document of this type to be presented to the academic community. The efforts to complete this task have been applauded because a project of this magnitude has not been previously attempted. There is a truth in stating that the gospel drumming community contains extraordinarily talented musicians, but talent alone does not equate to success. Proverbs 18:16 states, "A man's gift will make room for him and bring him before great men" and quite often, gospel musicians assume that their gift alone is enough. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The need for drummers who posses the

characteristic style of gospel drumming are highly sought after, but they must realize the requirements that come along with the position. You must carry yourself in a professional manner, engulf yourself in various styles of music, develop an understanding of music notation and become a refined, consummate musician. It is hoped that the readers of this project become inspired to continue on with the research of detailing the style of gospel drumming, and bring to light the significant contributions that the musicians have provided for the drumming community as a whole.

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APPENDIX A

FULL INTERVIEWS

Calvin Rodgers Interview Transcription (May 27th, 2014)

LL- Through Gospel Music, who were your influences***?***

CR- Well, my first influences were the people I grew up in church listening, which are people who were not full time professional musicians, some of them weren't. I grew up in a church in Chicago called Trinity All Nations. I'm not sure if you are into the history of Gospel music, there was a song called Are You Ready?" [sings snippet of song] That song is by Trinity All Nations, which the Pastor was my God Mother named Rev. Evelyn Davis and my father was a guitar player at that church. He and my uncle [God Uncle] named Larry Roberts Sr. is actually the pastor of the church now. He and my Father were best friends and actually were co-writers of the song "Are You Ready." Larry Roberts Jr. is a name that you may know. He is one of the drummers at the church I play for now, New Life. He's a songwriter, multi-instrumentalists, and he was one my very first influences on drums. A cousin of mine named Vera Spolten, grew up at the same church and was also one of my influences on drums. There was an older gentleman named Arnold Baymon, who I talk about sometimes. Arnold was a guy that I don't really know much about because I was very young, but he was a big dude. Kinda like Jeff Davis. Big guy with a strong, STRONG back beat. When the dude sat down the drums you would just look at him and shake…and just... I mean…. his pocket was just so… strong because he was a big guy and had a heavy stroke. He was a guy that just loved playing drums at church. He would sing, he would play and man I mean that dude would play shouting music all day and night. You could really feel everything that guy played. I grew up in Chicago, which is a staple of gospel music, so as a kid, from the time I was like 8 or 9 years old, I had direct, personal access to a lot of guys who were apart of making gospel music so trendy. They were apart of the revolution of gospel music like the *Thompson Community Singers*. My dad was really good friends with Percy Bady, who's brother Raymond Bady is an incredible drummer. One of the drummers for *Thompson Community Singers*, he was the drummer for Donnie McClurkin, Marvin Sapp now, R. Kelly…

LL- Ray?!?! Yeah…Yeah...[remembering him]

CR- Yep… and for years, Ray Bady sat up under Kevin Brunson who is the drummer for the *Thompson Community Singers* [*TCS*]. His father was Milton Brunson, who formed the *TCS* so there's a long chain that extends from certain things. There's another guy who's right behind Kevin is named Clyde Davis, who is probably the most influential person on my drumming from the time I was maybe 7-8 years old until I was maybe 15

or16 years old. This guy was the person who molded and shaped my tone. The way that my drums sound on records and live, the 8in tom…the set-up that I play now is the set-up that this guy Clyde Davis played back in the 80s.

LL- With the 3 up top and the low…

CR- 3 rack toms, 8, 10, 12 [inch], and he skipped the 14 and went straight to the 16. Punchy bass drum and a deep snare drum but tuned high. When a lot of guys were using smaller snare drums for high pitch, this guy was using deeper snare drums [in shell and depth] but tuned them high. So, he was probably my biggest influence. And we were very close. My father was a songwriter and producer, and he was my father's main drummer. I sat up under him in studio sessions and things like that, I watched him, and I would set up his drums. When my parents bought my first drum kit, I didn't get cymbals. I just got a drum kit and a set of hi-hats and then I had to work to buy my own cymbals. But I would have gigs every now and then and I would call Clyde. He would loan me cymbals, and I would just go hang out with him because he was someone my dad trusted. So he mentored me, not really knowing he was a mentor. He was just being there for a friend of a friend. He was like, "this is like my best friend' son so let me look out for him." I spent a lot of time with him. Going to Guitar Center was like an event back then, for me as a kid and Clyde would pick me up and take me to Guitar Center. I'm 35 years old man so this was back in the day when you could go to Guitar Center and they would let you just wale on the drums. You could just go, sit there, and just play for 20-30 minutes. That was like a field trip for me because I didn't have access to a lot of gear growing up in church. I did not grow up in a poor family, but a very moderate family. I didn't have access to a lot of the high-end gear and stuff like that so going to Guitar Center, playing on all of the high-end drums and cymbals was a trip. It was odd seeing all the different forms of cymbals because my church just only had crashes and a ride. I didn't know anything about splashes, and chinas, and all of that stuff…. I'm getting way off subject…but anyway…. back to Clyde Davis. There was Clyde Davis, and then there was Ray Bady. There was also a guy named Felix Pollard. He's living in LA now and plays with Lionel Richie and Clay Aiken. This entire list of guys were directly influenced by Kevin Brunson and they all came out of that camp with the TCS. They all, at some point in time, would fill in for Kevin and they were apart of the slew of musicians that producers would use. So those were my very first direct influences.

Soon after, I discovered recorded music because most of the music I was familiar with was just the music that I heard at church on a Sunday. That's how I came to know songs. My dad, of course being a musician, was an avid fan of gospel music. He was a very huge fan of Walter and Edwin Hawkins, Andre Crouch, and Thomas Whitfield, so being a songwriter and musician that he was, he had a very extensive record collection. I was just telling this story to Fred Hammond the other day about being at home one Saturday, my parents were busy doing chores and just cleaning up around the house. I sat in front of our big stereo system, opened this drawer up at the bottom and saw my dad's record

collection. I went through the records, put one on, listen to it, and started air drumming. I had a little makeshift drum kit with boxes, pencils, pens and stuff like that. I'm going through all of these records with Thomas Whitfield, the O'Neil Twins, James Cleveland, and artist like that. Eventually I got to Walter Hawkins *Jesus Christ is the Way* album. I got to that record and I heard this jazz tune called "Strange". What's so crazy about gospel music is that it's filled with so many types of music within it. As a kid, and even as a teenager, my introduction to different genres of music came through gospel music. Which is why I feel it's so influential and why it does so many things. This is why you're writing this dissertation. Gospel music is not just gospel music. We have 7-8 genres within one genre. There is no Country music and then country rap, and then country jazz, and then indie country, and then traditional country, contemporary country. There is just country music. Same for R&B. Jazz, you have a couple of different forms, maybe. You have traditional jazz, you got bebop, you got straight ahead, you got fusion, and then you have latin jazz. But all of those are kinda set apart still. Gospel music, you have contemporary, traditional. We've got gospel rap, we've got instrumental gospel, we got CCM [Contemporary Christian] music, we've got adult contemporary Christian music, and we've got inspirational music. In all of those different settings of music, all of those different genres, you have to be well versed. So what has happened with gospel music is just that we've gotten to the point to where you have to know a lot about a lot of different music. So my introduction to jazz was Walter Hawkins and the Walter Hawkins family, "Strange". It's a song with a big band arrangement, with horns and all of that. I heard that song and was blown away because I'd never heard jazz. I didn't know what it was. So I'm hearing it and I'm listening to this ride pattern and it sounds like devotional music, or sounds like church, or kinda like slowed down shout music but, I'm like "There's something different about it" and it kinda just overwhelmed me. I decided I really liked what I was hearing from them and I searched for more records from the Hawkins. The very next record that I listened to was *Love Alive I* with "Until I Found the Lord" on it. When I put in "Until I found the Lord," I couldn't even air drum. I couldn't move, I couldn't talk, I couldn't do anything. I just sat in the floor with a blank expression on my face because I'd never heard drums played like that. I just sat there in complete amazement. I listened to Joel Smith and I remember reading on one of the credits how young he was. The guy was 16 or 17 years old playing drums on that record like that. And, I mean, I have the same emotion every time I listen at that song because Joel Smith completely just…I mean the way he played that track, drums were not being played like that. Everything he was playing on that track is just unbelievable. That changed everything about drums to me. Everything I'd heard on drums before then made me want to mimic it. That song made me want to create drum music like that. I wanted to play drums in a way that it would completely captivate the person that was hearing it. I didn't want to play for people, I didn't want to play for show, but I wanted to pull on that emotion that had been pulled on for me when I heard that song. When I heard those drums, it just completely arrested me, and I'm like "This is the way I want to play drums." Not these kind of chops, not this particular lick, but this passion and this emotion that I'm hearing from this guy's drumming is how I have to play drums. And so that for

me, I was maybe 10 yrs. old then, and that song was a staple for me. Has been for a long time. I would come home and I would practice that song every single day and I did it for a long time. As time went on, I started practicing more and more stuff that Joel Smith was getting on. Everything that I knew, I would ask my dad. He was really the only drummer for a long time. I would ask my dad, "Is Joel Smith playing on it?" and we would buy it. If the Hawkins had a new record out, I knew to go look at the back of the albums. At the time we were still buying albums, I knew to turn the album over on the back and look at it. I saw Joel Smith's name, and I'd ask my dad to buy it.

LL: [Laughter] You gotta go get it. He's playing, we gotta get it!

CR: Yep… But then my dad still was very much a musician, very much a songwriter, so he also listened to everything. Even though he didn't encourage me to listen to other forms of music and other styles, he listened at it and he just kinda let me decide whether or not I liked it. I remember listening to an Andre Crouch record, and my dad telling me about Bill Maxwell. He's another drummer who was very influential in gospel music, but Bill Maxwell was from another place. When I started looking at him, I started being confused because I would start seeing his name on the albums as a drummer and a producer. I thought, "How does that work, what does that mean and how does he do that?" I'll admit and I hate to say it, as a youngster, I wasn't as attracted to Bill Maxwell's playing as I was to Joel Smith. Bill Maxwell was a producer and as I got older I grew to appreciate it, but his playing didn't grab me as Joel's did immediately. Bill Maxwell was a producer, he was a songwriter, and he was all about tone. He was all about the song, and he was all about time. But studying some of those Andre Crouch records, I came across names like Abe Laboriel, Joe Sample and just so many other guys who were doing other stuff. I even remember coming across some solo Joe Sample records. I ended up seeing that my dad had some Crusaders albums and I'm like "This is the same guy that's playing on the Andre Crouch record. He's got some instrumental stuff happening, and he's using some of the same guys and I'm just thinking, "WOW, that's crazy." I remember when I was a kid, we saw this concert on TV with Michael Jackson and I saw Ricky Lawson playing drums. I didn't know who Ricky was but he had this thing on his kick drum that said "Ricky Remo" *[Laughter]* I don't know if you remember that. He had his name going across the kick drum. Horizontally it said "Ricky" and vertically it said "Remo." I didn't know who he was, I just remember seeing "Ricky Remo." I went to Guitar Center and I saw an ad with him that said "Ricky Remo" and I'm like "That's the guy I saw on TV playing with Michael Jackson." I picked up this drum magazine, my dad bought the magazine with "Ricky Remo" on it and I just bought it because his picture was on the front of it. Then Clyde Davis who I was talking about earlier, tells me that Ricky is in a band called the *YellowJackets*. I looked through my dad's collection, I go to see if my dad has any *YellowJackets*, sure enough he does and I get into the *YellowJackets*. I start liking them and then I find these other two *YellowJackets* records that Ricky isn't on. It's Will Kennedy on there. So, I started really getting into it, I started listening to that, and just so many things. Here I am, about 14-15

years old and I'm listening to all of this music. My drumming influences at this moment are the guys that play in church, the guys here in Chicago: Kevin Brunson, Ray Bady, Clyde Davis, Felix Pollard, Arnold Baymon, Joel Smith, Bill Maxwell, then Ricky Lawson and Will Kennedy. And then I get this tape of The Buddy Rich Memorial thing…

LL: [Laughter] Aww man…. With Weckl, Vinny…

CR: ….Weckl, Gadd and Vinny right. To show you how long ago this was, like there was no audio of this stuff. In today's time, you can find audio of anything that been recorded right? A friend of my cousin had the video but there was no way to get the audio. You just had to put a tape recorder up to the television and recorded it on a tape cassette. And then we distributed it, we passed it around, it finally made it to me and I heard the names Dave Weckl, Vinny Colaiuta, and Steve Gadd. So, again at the music store I see a picture of Dave Weckl and I was really drawn to his playing. Vinny Colaiuta, I loved his playing and Steve Gadd but I was really, really drawn to Dave Weckl. It was just his whole thing. It was the polished, the well polished thing. He's sitting there, playing drums and has on a tuxedo. Vinny had on a suit and a tie, Steve Gadd had on a black tux, but Dave Weckl looks like the quintessential, squeaky clean, well polished drummer and I'm drawn to that. So he then becomes one of my big influences. I started finding music and tapes, I got some Chick Corea stuff and then Master Plan came out, and I had to have it. So, from the time I'm 10 to maybe 14-15 [years old], I got this gumbo of music and drummers who are directly influencing me, and having this impact on my drumming.

Every drummer you talk to, if you're going to get the major guys, you're going to get the same kind of story. "Ok, we have the guys that we see every Sunday, or the guys we see around town at the musicals. And then we get some guy that we end up listening to after finding them on a record." At that age, there was no YouTube®, there was no iTunes®, there was no internet, so I grew up in a time where the appreciation for music was so much higher. I believe this because you really had to be engulfed in the lesson, in the moment. If you got a chance to hear Marvin McQuitty play, you weren't going to spend your time holding your iPhone up video taping that thing. You were engulfed in the less at that moment. I remember my dad taking me to see Percy Bady play with Bebe and CeCe Winans. Was it Dana Davis on drums? It may have been Dana Davis on drums and I just watched him all night. I watched everything he did, every single thing he did. I watched how the bass player communicated with him. I watched how he commanded the songs and how he played the part. I paid attention to all of that. I was so lucky not to miss those lessons because of me saying, "Oh, I want to take this and put it up on YouTube, or get it on video so I can throw it up on Socialcam® or Facebook®, or something just to say I was there." I believe that social media and these things have kind of diminished the value of the lesson now because we're all like, "Oh well I can always go back to it. If I get it on my phone, or capture it on my iPad, I don't really have to pay attention to it now because I can go back and look at it tomorrow." It's not the same. That iPad recording,

that iPhone recording… you're not going to get the emotion that's transferred right at that moment. Maybe some people feel like they do. But to me, I feel like that's one reason why we have the diminishing of such incredible musicians and its because we're not getting the lessons anymore.

LL: Hearing Sput [Robert Searight] play with God's Property was some of the first solo drumming I experienced in Gospel Music. What were some of the first solos you heard in gospel music that was played?

CR: Again, a lot of that stuff I got to hear from a lot of local guys. There is some documented. There is a clip with the *Thompson Community Singers* that's on YouTube®. They had a video for one of their live events; it may have been Live in Florida or something like that. I would hear the Tommy's [TCS] a lot and I heard Kevin Brunson take solos kinda often. I would go, hear them play, and he would take a solo on shout music. Before shedding was popular, before it was called "shedding", it was just jam sessions. The church I grew up in, Trinity, there were 3 of us that played drums. My other two cousins, Larry Roberts and Vera Spolten, both of those guys were multi-instrumentalist so they played drums and keys. But most of the times they played drums. Church is the same way today: Everybody growing up that wants to play an instrument wants to play drums. Growing up in the Pentecostal church, Friday night service, it was nothing for us to be playing shout music, and soloing over shout music one at a time. My cousin would be playing drums for a little while, he would be soloing and he'd take a solo and go back to shout music. Then we'd switch with the other cousin getting on the drums because the music never stops. That's really how I was introduced to soloing. A very unorthodox method, with no bar counting, no set bars, not count in, no lead in, just very random and that was how we started learning how to solo. Later on, as my dad started letting me hear different music, I remember he had a Ricky Peterson record that Vinny Colaiuta was playing on. I remember listening to it and hearing a solo. Then seeing those Buddy Rich clips had to be my first introduction to drums being a solo instrument. Again, I would go to concerts here in Chicago and we had EVERYBODY here man! I would go to concerts and I heard everybody play, and at the end they would give the drummer a solo. I would hear that kind of stuff, but probably with the drums being a solo instrument or leading as an instrument, that stuff was learned more so when I got into Weckl or when I saw the Buddy Rich thing. I knew who Buddy Rich was as a kid. I knew of him but I'd never seen him play. I remember seeing him once on the Tonight Show with Johnny Carson and that was pretty much it. I didn't have many times to be up when the Tonight Show was on because it was on late, I was a kid in school, so I didn't get to see it a lot. For me, soloing was probably the last part of drumming that I was introduced to. Once I started hearing Master Plan [Dave Weckl] and Heads up, I started seeing and hearing that stuff, but that was the last part of my drumming that was brought full circle.

LL: Because I came from an academic background I can easily identify the rudimental-based fills that are played in much of today's gospel music. What can you say are some fills, patterns, or styles that impacted your playing? Were there any specific licks that you got from a particular player that helped you expand?

CR: Yeah, all of the Gerald Heyward stuff! Especially from back when he was with Hezekiah Walker and James Hall. The first two, the *Oh Lord We Praise You* record, that album was something that I practiced to everyday. I remember around 13, 14, 15 [years old], hearing that record and hearing that fill [air drumming]… I remember hearing that and going, "First of all who takes this long on a fill? Who plays a fill this long? That's a long fill! Who plays doubles back to back like that?" I was blown away. That's a fill that I took which is basically some form of doubles or 32nd notes broken up. That fill and learning to play it different ways was one fill that definitely helped me just even to establish that I was a drummer that people wanted to listen to. If you couldn't play that stuff, no one listened. This was how you got people's attention. When someone played that fill, you stopped and thought, "Hold on. Wait a minute. Let me pay attention to what he's doing." So that's one fill and the double paradiddle is another one. Which, my introduction to that lick was from Ricky Lawson. I remember hearing it and one of my cousins, Vera Spolten, he studied jazz so he knew what it was when I was playing it. Actually, I was playing it wrong because as a church drummer and growing up as a church guy, I didn't have the balance between both of my hands. I was skipping the double, and accented the diddle in the left hand, so I was playing it but playing it wrong. I remember him asking me, "hey, where'd you get that from?" I said "I heard this dude playing it on this album that my dad has." He looked at me and said that was pretty amazing how I was a kid and knew where to play it. I knew where to play it at because I was listening to different music. I was hearing the *YellowJackets*, Alex Buyon, and all of the stuff that Ricky was playing on. I played it inside of a church song and he was just like, "Where did you get that from? How'd you know [how to play that]?" Then I played it for him and then he started showing it to me and he told me what it was. He said, "First of all, you're playing a double paradiddle so, do you know a single paradiddle?" Nah. I have no idea what a paradiddle is or any of that. I just heard it on an album and figured it out. He started showing it to me, showing me how I was playing it wrong and how it was supposed to be executed. Those were my first drum lessons. I never had a lesson up until then and I was probably about 10 years old. Everything I learned how to play, I just listened to the radio and just played. The double paradiddle, that form of the 32nd note with the fills being some of the doubles on the kick drum and then eventually taking some of those 32nd notes and turning them into diddles in the left hand, making the left hand instead of just being singles. I eventually evolved into learning after watching Weckl and breaking down his licks. I remember finally getting those videocassettes and I got the first 2 Buddy Rich Memorials. The first one had Dennis Chambers on there, Greg Bissonnette, and Louis Belson. The second had Weckl, Gadd, and Colaiuta. Then I bought these two Weckl videotapes, Back to Basics and I forgot the second one. I bought both of those videos; I started figuring out the Dave Weckl chops and the triplet thing that

he was very famous for. It was him playing the triplet rhythm and the alternating of the hands. Eventually I learned the paradiddle-diddle, which was probably, well, that's just my favorite accent. It's just so many ways to be played. I like the ins and outs of it and I like how you can play it over and over. If you learn it and master it, you can play it in any time signature. There's a way to play that thing in a 12/8, there's a way to play it a straight shuffle, there's a way to play it in a hip-hop, in a funk, in a swing, you can swing it, you can take the swing off, you can dot the 8th, its so many ways to play it. So those were the ones that I can definitely point to. Those were the one's that fit into gospel music. They were the ones, when I played them, people noticed and they sounded different from what everybody else was playing. Everybody was playing a lot of the Swiss army triplet stuff and that's what was very popular at the time. Kevin Brunson was doing it a lot. There was a lot of that happening. And so nobody was really getting into playing stuff like the diddles, in any form of it. The single, the double, the diddle-diddle, nobody was really playing that stuff. So when you started playing that and people started hearing it, they started to say, "Hold on, hold on, what? What are you playing?" Those definitely were the licks that really made and shaped gospel drumming after a while. I think from the late 70s to early 80s, it was all about the Swiss army triplets. Everybody was doing that. Then you had Joel Smith coming with all of the syncopation in his playing. Joel Smith was incorporating the buzz roll into a lot of his chops. Not only were we hearing the syncopation in the left hand with him, but he was breaking up his accents and his beats. "Until I found the Lord" was [drumming example of syncopation]… it was a lot of that stuff. But then he would incorporate the buzz roll too. When he started bringing that stuff out, we were all just kinda like WOW! All of that was mid to late 80s. He was famous for playing up-tempo rhythms, which was later on in the Tramaine Hawkins stuff like The Tramaine Hawkins Live record…. [singing "Praise the name of Jesus (Drumming example)] He brought the whole syncopation of the left hand thing into gospel. He brought ghost notes into gospel and we didn't know about that kind of playing. We weren't doing that. Joel Smith brought all of that stuff in there and he started all of that.

LL: Man, you just made my day!! Aww man… because that's the stuff I've wondered. I knew it was before me. I grew up listening to your records. I had a friend of mine, he's actually a student as well, write a whole paper on the "Rain on Us" solo. There's a timpanist named Elliott Carter and his whole thing was metric modulation. The guy wrote a paper due to the professor said that there was not percussive knowledge or information in gospel drumming because they're just playing a bunch of stuff. He made this whole paper on the metric modulation of the drumming in the "Rain on Us" solos. Growing up, I was born in 1983, so as a 7-8 year old trying to play that stuff, I just thought "What???" That was just so far advanced. But it's totally coming full circle because when people asked me who did I listen to, I would say a lot of names and a lot of the Hezekiah Walker stuff. Now that I'm getting this information, I just never thought about where it came from. And that's the whole purpose of writing this, to know that information like syncopation or ghost notes and find out when did ghost notes come in to gospel. Now,

when you listen to Spanky on the Tye Tribbett stuff with all of the right hand ghosting and stuff to say, "Ok, he heard it from this person and this person heard it from them." This is really the whole point of everything.

CR: Yeah, and see you gotta remember someone else. Chris Dave. In the early 1990s, maybe 92-93, Chris Dave bursts on the scene. *Mint Condition* comes out. Everybody was cool on *Mint Condition* but again, not many gospel guys were hearing them perform live. We knew them from the radio, "You Send Me Swingin'," "Pretty Brown Eyes," but there was another side of *Mint Condition* that you caught when you went to see them live. And it wasn't until their performance on BET-Planet Groove that the world got to see. We didn't know! Chris Dave comes on and the first thing we grasp, the first thing he teaches us is him playing the double time feel over the half time groove. [sings drum example] Nobody is playing that! Nobody is doing that man! That's the first thing. And then, he's playing it over a ballad. He completely changed gospel music. The thing about gospel music is that it comes from so many places. So we have a drummer that doesn't play gospel music, influence a whole generation of gospel drummers from the outside. And he completely changes the way everybody played gospel music. I don't care what anybody says, Chris Dave changed it. When that concert aired on Planet Groove, there wasn't a drummer that played the same, gospel music wise. There wasn't a drummer that played the same after that. Everybody changed after that. Everyone.

LL: I know you mentioned the whole Walter Hawkins thing. In the dissertation, you have to give signs of future research. I stated that future research could be an individual, or a specific decade of playing. One of the topics for future research I said could be on your playing, period. Because in the realm of gospel music today, lets just be honest, you're the most in demand player in the genre right now. So knowing how you got your start, let's just say from Bishop Larry Trotter, from then until now. I let the committee hear your playing on *Rain on Us* and then I let them committee hear "Never Again*."* Without knowing that they were a decade apart, they asked, "Is that the same guy?" because the playing is still at a very high level. So knowing that you have a career that spans over 15+ years, how do you feel that gospel drumming has evolved?

CR: Well, I think the level of artistry has always been high. I mean, some people are going to dislike what I'm saying but let's just put it out there. Gospel musicians are the best musicians in the world. I'm just going say it. Some are going to agree and some are not going to agree. This is my personal opinion. Gospel musicians are the best in the world. And the reason why we're getting better is…. Well, it's a double edge sword. Musicians are coming out younger and they're coming out better. Where as, I was making my stamp into gospel music when I was probably around 23 during the years I played with John P. Kee, yeah I did some things. I feel like those years were boot camp for me. I would tend to believe that I really started making a mark in music when I started recording. So I would say around the time I was maybe 21-22, between 21-25, I did tons of records. I did a lot of recording and then I just started playing with Fred. Now guys are

making their marks at 15-16 years old. We've had Eddie Heyward playing drums on the James Hall record when he was 8 years old. He was 8 years old on *God Is in Control.* He was 8 years old when they put him on that song. 8 years old, you know! That's insane, that's just insane! Then you think about the guys that are coming up like guys here in Chicago. A guy that fills in for me a lot is a guy named Clemmons Poindexter. Clemmons is 19 now but he has been called on to sub for professional like Ray Bady and myself since he was 16 years old. I think he subbed his first gig for Pastor Sapp when he was like 16, for Ray. He ended up going out with me and he goes out with Fred at 18. Varo [Johnson], same thing. Lil Mike [Mitchell], same thing. And they are moving past gospel music too. I think Lil Mike is playing with Stanley Clarke now. I think the evolution is just, there's something you get playing in the church that you don't get anywhere else. I think the church thing; it gives you something that can't be taught. If you get a church musician who goes and get's his degree?? It's like "Man, this dude is unstoppable!" Because not only can he play with tons of feel and play with tons of emotion, but he can also sit down at the drop of a hat and read the music. He can breakdown everything that he's playing and he can show you what the music is that he's playing. He can show you the chops and he can break it down to you.

I think with the way that drumming has progressed and all of the technology that we have now; we've got YouTube, we have iTunes, we have DVDs and everything of that nature. The musicians are getting better and younger. Now, there's somewhat of a handicap to that. When I grew up, I didn't have a sense of entitlement. I spent years sitting in rehearsals, playing and practicing for events that I would never be apart of, and that's just the way it went. I don't care how good you think you are and how good your really are, some things you just have to wait on, and there was a lesson to be learned in that. There was humility to be learned in that. I vividly remember Albertina Walker coming to my church to record a record and feeling like, "Aww man, I know they're going to use me on this record" and they didn't. I felt like I was better than the guy they picked but the guy that they chose to play on the record, he couldn't come to every rehearsal. So there I am every night in rehearsal 2-3 times a week practicing these songs with this choir and killing them, or I'm feeling like I'm killing them. Then I realize, I have to be there knowing I'm not going to play this record. And I have to say, that is something that doesn't happen now days. For one, everybody records now. Recording was a big deal back in the day. Everyone records now and everybody feels like they should be recorded. Everybody feels like "Ohh, It's my time." Everybody feels entitled now because they're good. Part of the reason why everybody feels like they're good is because, instead of them spending time with their instrument and learning about themselves, they're spending their time on the internet learning about Aaron Spears, learning about Calvin Rodgers, or learning about Spanky, learning about Lil John [Roberts] or Chris Dave instead of developing themselves. So, while you have a bunch of talented musicians who can play like everybody else in the world, we're not creating musicians who have their own identity anymore. And they're somewhat arrogant as well. That's just how it is now. But that doesn't change the high level of musicianship that these guys are attaining. I

mean, you can go on YouTube, type in "church drummer," and some guy you've never heard of will pop up. He's playing at a church that seats 38 people, with a beat up, raggedy drum kit and he is smashing. He is killing! He is killing. So, you ask about how drumming has progressed in gospel music? It's just evolved. My thought on gospel drummers is that, we were kind of already ahead of the game. And I hope it doesn't come off as me being cocky or being arrogant, I just again feel that all of our musicians, we're just better. The reason why a lot of us don't succeed is because we get in our own way. We don't become skilled. We don't become professionals. We think that the talent is just enough and it's not. The gig is just not enough. Being able to play is not just good enough you know? I think that's what happens and it's why so many of us don't get major gigs. A lot of it is politics we have to learn. There are guys that can outplay Paul Leim. Paul Leim is one of my favorites. I don't know if you are familiar with him, are you familiar with Paul Leim?

LL: No I'm not but he his name sounds familiar though.

CR: Nashville drummer. He has a Yamaha snare out.

LL: Ok, that's why I said it sounds familiar. I work closely with the Yamaha rep here.

CR: Ok. Paul Leim is a Nashville studio ace. Not a lot of people consider him to be just phenomenal. He's not what's considered to be a mind-blowing drummer. Definitely in the church and gospel world, he would be considered maybe average. But let me tell you something, man that dude he's like… amazing. First of all, he went from LA to Nashville. He's played on every major pop album/artist from Shana Twain, Kelly Clarkson, to Lionel Richie, Peter Cetera, all of that stuff. He's done it all. He's a studio Ace. The dude knows how to read, knows how to produce, great drum tones, samples, loops, whatever he needs to do. And then we wonder sometimes "Why don't I have this guys gig?" Well just cause you can play the drums doesn't mean you should have his gig you know? We have to make sure we progress. Not just that we can play but that we can deliver. Its more to playing drums that just sitting behind a kit and whaling away at the drums. And that's just one example. Ricky Lawson was always challenged that way. People were always saying, "Oh he's just ok. He's got pocket." Nah, that dude knew how to play a song. His backbeat was impeccable. His 2 and 4 was the most solid 2 and 4 probably ever in the game. Probably the strongest we will ever see. And his pocket was like running water; it never stopped. It was fluent and it was always there. It was solid and timely. Every fill he played was dialed in and sometimes people gave him a hard time. "He ain't that good," No, that guy was really that good. There's evidence behind it. He was called the "drummer to the stars." There wasn't one major act that he didn't play behind or record with. People don't know how hard it is but I spent years disciplining myself enough to play that 5 or 7 minute, solid 4/4 groove with no extra anything behind it like he did on the Michael Jackson Bucharest on "Billy Jean." That takes discipline. That takes some work. I still believe, even still, that gospel drummers are just ahead of

the game. Growing up in church I think, it just makes us better. It really makes us better. It gives us a feel that doesn't exist anywhere else. It gives us an intuition and a way of thinking in the way we hear music. It just gives us something else.

LL: Also, the genesis of this whole dissertation was because I felt like gospel drummers were prepared to play in other genres like R&B. For instance, you look at the majority of R&B artist today and they gospel drummers. Think about Jill Scott….

CR: Yep…

LL: You think about Erykah Badu…

CR: Yep.

LL: You think about anybody, they're going to come and grab people from the R&B genre….

CR: Justin Timberlake.

LL: With Brian Frasier-Moore….

CR: He's got an entire church gang out there…

LL: And I think that is because everybody is equipped. You stated the whole thing with Paul Leim that drumming is just not it, but what do you feel are some of the demands that are placed on a drummer in today's time? This is an additional question but we can tie the two together.

CR: Well, we're in the age now where people are finally open to the creativity, the thoughts and ideas coming from the drummer. Now, more than ever, playing the drums just isn't good enough. People want to know if you have something else in you. They want to know if you can be creative with the music. They want to hear you give some opinions about how it should feel. They want you to create and they want your influence on the music. A lot of the gigs have programming coming from the drummer. I know with me, I am very hands-on with the things I like to hear or I don't like to hear in the drum programming. I don't like a bunch of hi-hats and kick drums in the loops or whatever it is I'm playing to. I leave it to be very percussive with organic and open sounds. I prefer that kind of stuff. Don't give me a bunch of stuff that has sounds that sound like my drums. The demands that are put on us can vary from gig to gig. Sometimes they're going to want us to be programmers. Sometimes they're going to want us to be music directors and arrangers. Sometimes they're going to want us to create, they'll want our influence. They want whatever ideas we have. It'll vary from gig to gig.

LL: So, we talked about shout music earlier with Joel Smith and the whole syncopation thing. I think about 3 big examples: One was with Spanky [George McCurdy] and Tye Tribbett, the *Victory* album. From *Victory* to *Stand Out,* he had 2 different shuffles. Next, Hezekiah Walker's "Lift Him Up" was a big shout record, and then you with Byron Cage's "I Can't Hold It." Those are 3 very different shout music styles, or bumps, or whatever people want to label them. How do you feel that shout music has evolved? Because now, when you think about Tye Tribbett, you have entire songs that are being created based around shout music. Whereas in previous live recordings, people would go into shouting and it would be by chance that you would have that on the album. Now, you're getting pure songs that are written for shout music.

CR: Well, first of all with Spanky, Chris Dave and Lil John Roberts influenced him heavily. At time he was influenced by them, those 2 guys were fusing hip-hop and jazz. So Spanky's concept behind music is to incorporate his thing into everything. Even on a shout track he's going to incorporate... [makes shout drumming example] which is what he would play on a hip-hop track… [makes connecting example], that whole thing. That Philly lag thing, the whole playing behind the beat, Spanky is going to incorporate that. Jeff Leslie is on "Lift Him Up" and for the most part of that song; you never have the steady cut-time backbeat of shout music. It's broken up into phrases, there are a lot of smashes on the one with some accents in there and that's it. The Byron Cage thing with myself, there's a fuse between the "Lift Him Up" themes with a lot of accents, not a steady cut-time groove thing happening, but then there's some syncopation happening. This is a fuse of the older Joel Smith stuff and the influence of the newer guys I'm listening to. That thing is mainly an influence of what I hear from Keith Carlock. Keith is a player that uses the Moeller technique which is a lot of bounce, so when he plays his subdivision, he gets more notes because he's relying on the bounce. For me, in gospel music, the Moeller technique doesn't work, for me specifically but I like the sounds. I like the notes that it gets, I like the note value and I like the shuffle that it creates. You hear Keith Carlock… [sings an example], he's getting all of that, not from playing those notes, but from using that technique and the rebound. So my thing was to go after that without using that technique. First, I'm not as well skilled in that technique. You're going to have to spend a lot of time to master that. Second, for me, I just think it is too light, doesn't translate through and might get lost in the mix. He's playing a lot of instrumental music so they're focusing a lot on the things that he's playing so they're going turn him up in the mix and they'll catch all of that stuff. Not so much in gospel music. I had to figure out a way to incorporate this, get the notes and I worked on my hands. I started to play 3,4,5 notes in my left hand, and play them hard in order to get them there without the Moeller technique. So that was the cross between the Byron Cage song and the shuffle. I really dig Keith Carlock. I love his playing, I like his sound, I love his tone and I wish I was able to us it sometime. But I like the open tone, the very open and ringy bass drum, the overtone of the kick drum and the snare drum, the high pitched jazz toms, then the ringy, crashy ride kind of vibe. And the thing I like about it is that he's able to pull it off and he's playing with Steely Dan and John Mayer. Both Steely Dan and John Mayer

had Steve Jordan, who's another favorite of mine. Ricky Lawson was playing with Steely Dan so these are guys who had very tight, closed, tight, snappy and punchy sounds, and then Keith Carlock comes in with the complete opposite but he makes it work. And that's major, definitely major to me. It drew me to him even more because when I heard him I thought, "Geez, how was he able to pull that off? How was he able to convince them that he wasn't gonna change his tone up and he'll make them dig it? He'll make it work." So Keith Carlock was definitely influential to me for the last 5,6,7 years. I just completely dug his playing and that's been something that I've listened to a lot. You mentioned the Byron Cage track and it was just heavily influenced by the stuff I've heard Keith Carlock play over the years.

LL: I'm down to the last question and it deals with justification. I had to put in to words on why this researched document is important and one of my statements was that I feel like gospel music and gospel drumming is an untapped source of information. I don't know of anyone with my background in both gospel drumming and academia so I'm trying make sure that this comes off in the right avenue to let people know that gospel drumming isn't just a bunch of guys putting toms and kits together, going to sheds and saying this is what it is. I remember a negative statement made by Dennis Chambers saying that it doesn't make sense, but it does. I want to make sure I articulate it so that it does make sense and I want to let everyone know that this is important. So if you could give me something in closing on why gospel drumming is important?

CR: Well, I think for a period of time gospel drumming got a bad wrap. I remember one particular year, they had a gospel chops thing at NAMM and everybody was just giving them a hard time. They had this group of guys walking around with video cameras and everywhere they went, they'd go up to a booth, sit down and just blaze. It was just raw abandonment. It was untapped talent. It was talent that no one tapped into yet and no one has shown us how to use it and utilize it correctly. Like I said earlier, you can go type in gospel drummer and find a guy that plays in church and he can really play but he doesn't know what it takes. In a professional setting, he'd probably fall apart because he's not used to a controlled atmosphere. I've heard Dennis say that and I believe he's recanted that statement, I know he has. I know he's adjusted it because I know that Marvin McQuitty was one of his favorite drummers. I know that personally. I've had a chance to speak with him and I know that he doesn't necessarily mean that. But I believe that gospel drumming has put a sour taste in some people's mouth because we may come off as just being arrogant who have no control with just a bunch of talent, and that's not true. I think sometimes it comes off as we're a bunch of guys with talent and we don't know what to do with it. We're just going around looking for drum sets that nobody is sitting on and we just want to get on and show everybody that we can out chop them and that's not the case for all gospel drummers. That's not the case. And to the committee or whoever it is that's reading this, I want you to take this into consideration: We're not bucket boys. That's not what gospel drumming is. We're not bucket boys. I've seen those guys. You try to take them off the street, try to put them in a controlled situation and it

just doesn't work. That's not what gospel drummers are about, we're not about that. We're some of the most talented individuals. I know tons of guys who can read everything but have no feel. And I know tons of guys who have no feel, but if you write it out for them and specifically write what you want, they'll play it all the way down to the T. It's a catch 22, a give and a take. It's a gamble. If you hear a guy that can play, he's worked hard. Myself, Aaron Spears, Spanky, Chris Dave… Well, Chris has some college but I don't think Spanky went to school. We are all guys who have developed our thing on our own. We want to feel justified and we want to feel like we matter. It's kind of disheartening to know that, as a gospel drummer, you're not really recognized unless you do something else. Spanky [George McCurdy] deserves all the credit that he gets but that dude was bad before [Lady] Gaga. That dude was outright bad before [Lady] Gaga and that's just the way it is. Aaron Spears was bad in Gideon Band. Listen, he was the MAN! I don't care who you hear him play for, you'll never hear him play any gig like he plays with Gideon. Never. Never ever. That's the way it goes. It's a little disheartening but we just have to fight through it, we try to press through it and we just work hard to be good in our craft. I've worked really hard to make sure that I'm professional at all times and that way, if someone just so happens to decide "We'll give this guy a shot…he's a gospel guy," I'm able to be what I need to be and I work hard at that. I study music, I study all genres, I study all forms of music and I try to make sure I'm well versed. I listen to everyone and I listen to all music. I just try to make sure that I'm on top of it and it's a lot of us guys out there that's like that. We aren't all just trying to get up, show out, and show you that we can out chop anybody and we can't play four measures straight. That's not the case.

Fred Dinkins interview (August 24, 2014)

LL-How did you get your start in drumming?

FD- I started playing at an early age. My mom told me I was beating on pots and pans from birth. Going to church, they finally allowed a drummer to come in and play. When I was a kid, the pastor's name was Rev. Mitchell and his son was a good friend with Donny Hathaway. He would bring in different bands, they would play, but I wasn't old enough and I didn't have a drum set yet. I had some fake bongos, the small drums with the pins and nails on the side. I would sit on the front bench and play with the drummer. I finally got a drum set for $75 out of a pawnshop. I remember my brother taking me on the bus to go pay on the drums. If I had a dime, I would go pay on the drums and I finally got the drums out. I remember taking one lesson from a guy, maybe two just to get my coordination going, but I was pretty much in the pocket after that. The pastor's son name was Joe and he told me, "If this guy ever messes up, I'll give you a shot." So I would keep practicing and wait for this drummer to not show up or something and one day he didn't show up. Joe would take me around to see Donny Hathaway perform and I was too young to understand everything that was going. To me, it was just amazing to see. Joe turned me on to a beta video recorder and I got to see Marvin Gaye on video. Seeing Marvin Gaye on video, watching and listening to the show, that was a turning point in my life. When Joe and played in church the motherboard would sit over to my right. One day Joe said to me, "If by beat 4, if I don't hear those heels clicking, that means you're not grooving." I had no idea what beat 4 was, measure 1 or whatever but he taught us how to be in the pocket and how to play with him. That was around age 12 and I guess I've been going ever since then.

LL- Who were your influences in gospel drumming?

FD- Joel Smith was my first influence. Then, once I heard BeBe and CeCe Winans and Andre Crouch it was Bill Maxwell. But another influence was Alex Acuna. A lot of people didn't know that Alex was playing but you could tell that there was something completely different going on. And I did not know that was the same Alex Acuna playing with Weather Report. He and Abe Liborio had a group called Koinonia and that was in the white circuit. So I used to listen to this white gospel station in St. Louis and I would hear Alex and Bill Maxwell play and I would just think, "Man, this is on another level."

LL- Around what time was this?

FD- This had to be the late 1970s when Andre was really big when he first came out. This was all around the same time when everyone came out but I think Alex and Bill were playing before Joel. I used to listen to a lot of other stuff but in gospel, it was those three for sure.

LL: So who were your influences outside of gospel music?

FD: Aww man, that's a long list. My top guy, and somehow it's amazing how God directed us and our destinies together but that's Harvey Mason. Harvey says we have kindred spirits and we don't know how but Harvey is my mentor. I used to listen to Alphonse Mouzon, Ndugu Chancler, Ricky Lawson, Jeff Porcaro, and I was always mesmerized. Dennis Chambers and I were around the same age when I heard about a young drummer that just joined Parliament at 16 years old. He played on "Tear the Roof off" and I was shocked! Nobody knew Dennis played the way that he does to this day, but he played like that with Parliament back then. In the heavy jazz stuff, of course it was Tony Williams and Billy Cobham. I was into Max Roach and everybody but I didn't really understand jazz at the time. I would just listen to the solos, I had no idea what they were doing, and why they did it but I liked it. I also liked Buddy Rich. My mom would let me stay up and watch "The Late Show with Johnny Carson" because Buddy Rich played on there all of the time. I also watched Don Kirshner's Rock Concert. It was a show that came on every Saturday night with all of classic bands and they would play a whole concert. They would showcase two bands and you would get a chance to see someone like Billy Cobham play about 4 songs straight out. You would see Chicago, all of these classic bands and just sit and watch. My mom would let me watch and the only prerequisite I was that I needed to be up in time for church the next morning. I was a PK [Preacher's Kid] so I could have any problems with my Dad and he was cool with that.

LL: How did you get your break into gospel music and playing for some of the artists?

FD: I went to a talent show that Milton Biggham was having in St. Louis. Malaco Records at the time, and he had a church somewhere on the east coast. They were looking for singers, I had a band but they didn't want to play, so I went and did a drum solo. Milton came up to me afterwards and says "Young man, that was pretty bold of you to come on a show like this and play drums. Are those your drums?" and I said yeah. At that time I had a set of Slingerland drums and kept them with new brand new heads on them. I used to set them up and break them down everyday. I would get out of school, and at least 3-4 times before I played and went to bed I would take them down and set them up. I set them up really fast, tuned them and he says "Who tuned the drums for you?" and I said it was me. "Wow, would you be interested in renting your drums?" Well, it depends and he said it was for the O'Neil Twins. I said sure, took my drums to the studio and let this guy play a couple of tunes. The engineer asked was I going to play on any of this stuff and I said no. Milton said, "How do you know what you're going to do? I wouldn't bring you over here and not have you play." So I ended up playing on a song called "Blessed Boulevard" and that song was Grammy Nominated. After that I started playing for all of the artists that came through St. Louis. [Lost audio…]

My biggest thing was playing for this white contemporary artist named Becky Fender [Lost audio…]

…. I wanted more of it but I wanted to be better. I still wasn't at the level that I wanted to be at because I used to hear Joel and I was like "Wait a minute, that's something different." And I didn't know he played bass and other instruments. Eventually after getting connected with Alex [Acuna] and Bill [Maxwell], I ended up moving to L.A. and I studied with Jeff Porcaro's dad.

LL: What were some of the first drum solos you heard?

FD: It was the jazz stuff, Buddy Rich. Buddy Rich, Max Roach and Art Blakey. Those were my influences and actually, they still are.

LL: Were there any specific drum fills you remember? I know your book breaks down patterns, systems and things of that nature but were there any drum fills you heard as a kid that impacted your playing?

FD: The *Headhunters* record with Harvey playing on Chameleon and then the track called Vein Melter. He did so much slick stuff on there and I just tried to mimic it. I would put that record on and I would mimic everything that I heard. There was one thing about Harvey that I noticed and it was weird. He played all styles and that's what made me say, "I'm not ready yet." I'm not sure if you remember but the Hawkins Family came out with a studio record that had a very fast, up-tempo jazz tune on there called "Strange." Man, I was done. I'm finished. I can't play like that. I thought to myself, "I have something good here, I can play, I can make it" but when I heard that, I was just done. I had to find out how to do that. I started seeking out how to make it happen.

LL: That same feeling you got from Joel in that era is the same feeling I got when I heard Joel play "Thank you Lord." I started playing drums at my church at age 7, and when our choir played that song, the piano player had to bring in another drummer because I could do it. I couldn't play it. I was a kid and wasn't developed. Knowing that he impacted so many generations and how drummers today do the same thing. They may think, "I thought I was good until I heard XYZ record so now I have to practice." Knowing how things have come full circle, how do you feel that drumming has evolved since those early days of hearing Joel Smith to what we have now with guys like Aaron Spears, Gerald Heyward and guys like that. How do you feel that drumming has evolved?

FD: Well, there is both good and bad but I don't want to sound negative. I like Gerald Heyward and I feel that he is the epitome and the next step over. Even though I didn't have the name that Joel had as far as being with a big famous group, but when I played with different groups that came through St. Louis and kids would line up on the front row. Parents would tell me that they brought their kids to watch me and people at my church would tell me that they were coming to see me play. But I played the music. I wanted to play and support the singing that I was playing to. If I got the chance to open up, then I would put something in there. Today, a problem that I hear with a lot of the

gospel stuff is that they hear differently. I teach guys and I'm quite sure you do to. I show them something and they come back with a whole different vocabulary of something new and I think, "Where did that come from? I didn't show you that." And they argue that I did. But how did they hear what they just played from what I showed them and they can't explain it. The music is great, the chops are great but the problem is the spirituality. There is a certain place, to me, where the groove sits and makes that music feel great. I think with the evolution, a lot of times everybody plays on top [of the beat]. Everybody has to have the energy to play the stuff that comes along with the new music. I hear now where everyone doesn't sit in the groove and that groove should be the first priority. I was at the tribute to Marvin McQuitty, Gerald played. He went up there and I don't think he even played a fill to be honest. He did it on purpose because he said that's where Marvin started and that's how he played his grooves. Whatever he played outside of that, it had the feel of the songs. For me, the feel of the music has to be there and to me, the spirituality has been lost.

LL: I see that you played with Tramaine Hawkins, what were some of the demands on you as a drummer during that time in gospel music?

FD: There were 2 things: Time and feel. That was the biggest thing to do. When I played "What Shall I Do?" we had less than an hour to get a take down. I hadn't even heard the song before. Somebody else had already tracked the song but she didn't want that. They had already been in the studio for two weeks apparently, and only had three tracks down. I came in one night, did three or four songs in a row, the producer went crazy so they had me come back. The day that we did "What Shall I Do?" I had never heard the song. I had been at the studio all day and they never let me hear it. When we got there and started recording, they would start to bring other people's stuff in. I had to get drum sounds and try to learn the song. The guy who wrote the song was there and every time I let a hit go by during the run down, he would stop me and complain. Finally we finished it but I never heard the playback. A few days later, I went to the studio and Tramaine [Hawkins] was there and asked me to come hang out. When I got there, a different set of drums were set up and her old drummer was there. Immediately I thought, "Wow, I bet you they replaced my track." So I asked Tramaine could I play it over, she looked at me and said "Are you crazy?" I thought to myself, "Oh boy, what did I just do?" She said to me that it was the most space a drummer has ever given her to sing in since she's been singing. She said Joel didn't give her that much space. He gave her space, but not that much. That was the one thing that was always demanded of me and most of the guys in that era. Do you remember Mattie Moss Clark? If you ever went to a convention with Mattie Moss Clark and you saw a drummer, I don't know if you've seen Al Foster and Ndugu Chancler with their cymbals flat, the gospel drummers adapted. I don't know if they adapted that from them or if Ndugu got it from the gospel drummers but we call that the "Mattie Moss" look. We called it this because Mattie Moss would throw stuff at you. She would have drummers lined up at the conventions and if you weren't playing right, she would make you get up. She would literally throw stuff at you and she didn't care. Bibles or whatever,

she would hit you. You would put your cymbals up to get out of the way. So you didn't play all of that stuff that kids get away with now. I remember one time doing a record with Joseph Price. He had a big choir in St. Louis and this was another way I got a chance to play with everyone because they backed up everybody. I did Joe's record, great tracks and everything but one day I listened to Tony Williams all day. I soaked myself in Tony Williams. We got to church Saturday night I went in there playing like a mad man and went crazy. I was playing Swiss triplets, flams, and everything else I'd heard. I'll never forget that. During intermission, Joe grabbed me in the hallway, by my collar, jacked me up and cursed me out. That taught me a valuable lesson that it's a time and a place for everything.

LL: In the 80s-90s era you stated that the demands were time and space. With the all of the virtuosity and the freedom that people have in today's time, what do you think are some of the demands being placed on the players now.

FD: It's weird because some people still have the traditional thing, but then some have this idea of the drummers being gladiators. Like the show "American Gladiators." I saw a thing about Beyoncé and they were doing her lighting. She was saying that she needed the lights to do a certain thing, and the producers said it would look bad with all of the lights flashing all over the place. Beyoncé answered "Oh no its not because its going to be on a time, the drummer is going to playing with a click to that tempo and will be chopping it up." I thought wow. I sat in on an audition with Randy Jackson not too long ago. The drummer played the tracks down, and Randy asked the drummer to open up. He picks a Jay-Z tune, the drummer played and I was blown away. So it's being asked of drummers now to be able to have the facility to do the things that are asked of you. But what I tell my guys still is that you have to have the time and the feel. You have to know when to play, what to play and get out of the way so that you can continue to work.

LL: Do you have any situations where you had to incorporate outside influences and bring them into gospel drumming and play on a track?

FD: Basically, what I do now is take everyone backwards. To me, nobody is playing anymore than Lenny White, Tony Williams, Mike Clark, Harvey [Mason], Ndugu [Chancler], Alphonse Mouzon, and Jack Dejohnette. They aren't playing anymore than those guys to me. In order to play the fusion stuff back in the day, you think about Billy Cobham and Tony Williams that's enough. Everybody was an influence from those guys so you had to have chops. If you can recall what they call smooth jazz, the early Bob Jazz and Dave Sanborn, those guys were killing. Playing in a concert like that, you had to have chops. It wasn't just someone playing a pocket and that's all you got. So that was my first influence of hearing fusion music. I didn't listen to gospel drummers. So when I played at church, everybody thought I was a jazz drummer but I had never played jazz because my dad. I was a PK and couldn't. I practiced to everything but he would not let me play with bands. When I started playing with people, everybody thought I was jazz

influenced. They thought "Oh, you just play jazz you don't play gospel." But I did. I just had a different approach to it.

LL: Why do you feel that gospel drumming is important?

FD: Growing up in a church and learning how to play was one of the most valuable things I ever had the opportunity to do because it did prepare me. First, I could play every style there was and could adapt. Playing in church, you learn to become a chameleon. Whatever somebody plays, somehow you are able to that adapt at the drop of the dime and make it feel right even if you're guessing. Now that I look at it, playing with a choir was like playing with a big band. You had to set up the choruses, you had to set up the accents and how you did it was up to you. The flavor that you did it with was up to you. The people that don't know how to play gospel or have never played it are normally the ones that always have an issue with feel. I've seen black kids that never grew up in church and can't play a shuffle. It blows me away and it's like "Really? What part of town did you come from? Where did you grow up?" Because if you went to a real black church, brother you learned how to play and you knew what music was. If you played in the band you know exactly what I'm saying.

LL: If you had to let someone know why it's important and why it should be made known and not looked at negatively as just guys with chops, why should we advocate for more understanding of gospel drumming?

FD: I believe people miss the point. You get in a church and play, but if you are for real about it, you also get spirituality behind it. If you listen to a preacher, try to follow His word, and you become one with God, to me what's where your gift comes from. In order for you to reach that status and say, "Hey, I'm a gospel drummer" and be able to play at church and hold your ground with the rest of the musicians, you got to have that foundation. If you learn and understand what that foundation is of gospel drumming, it will take you a long way in your music career because it helps you to adapt to becoming that chameleon that you need to be. Especially where the music has come from. Listen to someone like Calvin [Rodgers], Teddy Campbell and Gordon Campbell. Those are guys that I really respect because they still have the old school stuff inside of what they do. They have a persona about themselves that they live their life in a way where you say "This guys has that spiritual connection" because it's the feel that you have to create. There are a lot of drummers out there that we know, but the ones that played in church, you can tell them right off the bat from the first beat that they play.

LL: There was a situation I was in while performing with a band here in NC. The band was made up of various instruments and it wasn't gospel music. The venue was jumping but at the end of the night, this female came up to me and said, "You started playing in church." I laughed and asked how did she know. She said, "I can just tell. I can hear it. You sound like you grew up playing in church." That's kind of the basis on why I'm

doing this. It's the influence that gospel drummers can go in and out of any genre, still be true to the style but have that type of feel, the F-E-E-L that gets them through everything else.

FD: Exactly. You have to remember where our ancestors came from. You think about the African language. I mean, you think about who we are as a people, I'm talking about drummers. I often tell students, that chair we sit on called a throne and who sits on a throne? Nothing but kings. Nobody but kings can sit on that throne. To be in a band in the situation where you're playing, you think about it. The motherland always has a master drummer in whatever setting they're playing in. Somebody has to be the leader. You can the best MD [music director] in the world, and you can have the best choir in the world, but if the drummer is not on it then there is no difference.

Nate Robinson Interview (October 22, 2014)

LL: How did you get your start in drumming?

NR: Like most people, it was in church. I was attracted to the instrument when I was super young, maybe 2 or 3 years old and I would just watch the dudes playing at church. That's how I got started. I would get in trouble every Sunday because my mama would say "We have to leave and go somewhere after church so don't go over there to the drums." I would answer "Yes Ma'am" but as soon as church was over, I'd run straight to the drums and get in trouble. That's pretty much how it started.

LL: Who were your influences in Gospel music?

NR: To be honest, the weird thing about it is that I never really liked gospel at all even though I grew up in church. The dudes playing there were solid and good players, so I picked up to what they were doing but I didn't like the music much. So I never really got into any drummers that were really playing gospel. That's weird because I was learning in church but I was really more attracted to other styles of music. The first record I got that really blew my mind was the *Mo' Betta Blues* soundtrack and all of that was Jeff "Tain" Watts. The jazz drummers blew me away more so than the dudes that were playing the gospel stuff. There was one drummer that I really like, a Winans boy. He was signed to Bad Boy for a minute…

LL: Mario Winans…

NR: Yeah, Mario Winans "Skeeter". There was an album that my mama used to listen to, the *Ron Winans Family and Friends* album and this dude Skeeter was killing. He would be the one gospel drummer that made me think, "yeah, I like the way he plays." But he was so different. Drumming evolved a lot during my childhood. From the time I was really young, drummers were real simple, no bottom heads on the drums, just really simple. But then there was this period of about 10 years, from age 8 to 18, where everything changed a whole lot. There weren't a lot of dope gospel drummers when I was real young so he was one of the first players that really got my attention.

LL: I see you've mentioned Jeff "Tain" Watts, but who were some of your other influences outside of gospel music?

NR: A big influence was Chris Dave and that's because we grew up 10 minutes apart from each other. He's a couple of years older than me, I'd always bump into him during school competitions, or little church functions and he was a prodigy. He was 12 and I was 9 or 10, and he was playing circles around the grown ups. At that age, his playing was phenomenal, but he saw where he could go with it. He was a big influence in that way. Definitely "Tain" because that was a period of life where I had to decide: Do I want to

play basketball or do I want to play drums? When I got a chance to really see him go at it, it was like "OK. Bam, I like this. I think I'll go after drums." Tony Williams is another huge influence and then a little bit later on it was Steve Jordan. Once I started sifting through all of the big stuff, I had to find the foundation of this. It was Steve Jordan. He's the man that really got my attention. How to play grooves, how to really lay it down for four minutes and not play a bunch of notes. That's Steve Jordan.

LL: I definitely understand. It's discipline that a lot of people don't have. When I have my first lesson with students, I ask them to play for three minutes straight, without any fills, I tell them when to crash 1, and have everything sound solid. When they try, people realize that its harder than anything they've ever done because people don't have the discipline anymore. Who are some of the gospel artist that you've played with?

NR: Shawn McLemore, he was signed to John P. Kee's label back in the day. I played with John P. Kee for a quick minute during that season too. From the artist standpoint, that's about it. There were some other local people around Houston from back in the day but as far as artists that were really out there doing it, those are the two that I spent the most time with.

LL: How did you get your break in with Lecrae?

NR: It was through mutual friends and its weird how it happened. Everybody that knows me, they know that I love the Lord. Everybody knows that. But I also have this serious disdain for gospel and it's always been like that and it's mostly because of the lack of discipline. Guys overplay, it's all about "me, me, me," and I'm just not that kind of dude. It was weird. Me and Lecrae have mutual friends here in Atlanta, one named James. Jamie and I were producing records together, one day I got a call from a guy named Sho Baraka. In 2010, Jamie had given him my number and Sho called. "Hey man, I got your number from Jamie, I know you don't know me but we want to hire you to do this tour we're getting ready to do." I wasn't familiar with any of the artist, but he told me the names and Lecrae was one of them. I did a little bit of research, and at that point in my mind it was just Christian rap. I literally called him back and said, "yeah, I appreciate it but I'll pass." I just turned it down because in my mind, the little bit of background that I had with Christian rap, in particular, its all been just terrible. Musically and sonically, it just wasn't good. At this point, my resume looks good, I've worked for this person and that person, my resume looks nice and I wasn't going backwards. So I turned it down. I kept watching some of the video links that he sent me, and one was of a promo video. Most the promo video for the tour captured backstage activity. I thought, "man, these dudes look like their brotherhood was pretty serious and I could use that." I have 3 daughters and a wife, in a house full of women? I'll try it just for that! [Laughter] They looked like they had a pretty strong brotherhood happening so let me see what they're really about…. as men, no so much the music. I decided to take it and after the first week, I was definitely right about the brotherhood, but I was more impressed with the music. I

started to realize, this isn't Christian rap, these are just dudes that rap and they happen to be Christians. I was impressed with their musicality and it just happened to be a good fit.

LL: What are some of the other artists that you've played with outside of gospel?

NR: I did a lot of work with Jermaine Dupree and a couple of his artist. There's Johnta Austin, who is really Jermaine's main go-to writer. He never really came out as an artist because he's quite rich. He wrote so many songs that he was doing the artist thing just for fun. Another one of Jermaine's artist, Maestro Harrell, never really came out as an artist because he was an actor. Did you ever watch the wire?

LL: Yeah, I think I know who you're talking about…

NR: He played Randy on the wire. Maestro was doing his thing with acting. I basically worked at So So Def [Records] for a bunch of artist. I played with Angie Stone and Tank for a while. My first real gig, so to speak, was with Wayman Tisdale back when I was about 21. Chris [Dave] put me on and that was a really good experience. I was sad that he passed away not to long ago.

LL: Crazy story man! Wayman has a nephew named George Tisdale, and I played with him for a year. We were going strong for about a year with a lot of dates on an east coast tour [New York, Atlanta, Nashville, etc.], so I know one of his nephews.

NR: I'm pretty positive I know who you're talking about. I know his dad. But that was a cool period. I was young, I was still going to PV [Prairie View A&M University] at that time and that's why I ended up leaving school because he had me really busy. He was just a good dude, kind of took me into the family and taught me a bunch of real life stuff on how to approach the business. He was just a good dude. I still keep in touch with his daughter, especially since he passed. She's like a sister to me.

LL: This is some great information. It's crazy talking to people in the industry and hearing the stories that they have. I'm all about soaking up information and knowledge so throughout these interviews, I really get to see and hear a lot the behind the scene interactions that you never really get to know unless you're talking to somebody.

NR: I do the same thing. It's informal interviews and I'm always trying to talk to people and ask as many questions as possible.

LL: What was one of the first drum solos that you heard?

NR: One of the first solos that just really messed me up was…well, there's a couple. One was on John Coltrane' *A Love Supreme.* The way the album is written, the way it is made out, one of the movements starts with a solo. Elvin Jones just destroys it. And that opened

my eyes to a certain approach to soloing. A really musical approach, the phrasing, you can really hear him saying something. As opposed to dudes now who just play a bunch of licks. Of course I'd heard solos before then but that was one of the first performances that made me think about the approach. I followed Chris and another one was on a Mint Condition album when he played a dope solo. He definitely has a good blend of approaches too and it is always something to learn in his solos.

LL: Chris Dave literally changed my playing. I'm a huge Mint Condition fan and they can do no wrong in my book. But it was the Definition of a Band album and a rock tune called "Sometimes." The solo began with Stokley yelling "Introducing Chris "Daddy" Dave…" and he just went in. And then the next song on the album was called "Missing." And it had a real heavy groove, just grooving the entire time. He did this little fill towards the end of the song, you know, everyone was doing doubles on the foot at that time. I used to always tell people "If you want to know my playing, listen to this song and that's how I play." I used to listen to this song and engulf myself into his playing so much that I just felt like the song summed up who I was.

NR: Here's my take on the evolution over the last couple of years. Between the age of 8 to 18, there was a big change in drumming. I was born in 1977 so I'm right on the cusp of the old school and the new school. When I first started paying attention to drums, literally, you could tell that most drummers didn't have any kind of education. They weren't playing any kind of rudiments and that kind of stuff, or gospel drummers that is. I wasn't really aware at that point of the whole jazz drumming thing. Those were the dudes who were educated and really had skill behind what they were playing. Gospel drumming? The younger guys? Their technique was bad, it was nothing but sixteenth note licks around the drums [sings pattern], and that was all I ever heard, everywhere you went. Then Chris came along and in a big way, and I'm sure there were other people across the country, but in a big way he spurred the evolution of how people changed their playing. I'm not sure if you're familiar with Kathy Taylor, she's a minister of music in Houston now, but she was a popular gospel artist back in the 80s. Chris recorded on one of her albums; this had to be around '85 or '86 because I was very young. The song called "Joy Cometh in the Morning" started with quartet singing and Chris playing the groove for the first stanza of the song before the rest of the band came in. He played a little lick before the end of the stanza right before the band came in and nobody had ever heard that kind of approach and he had to record the album when he was 11 or 12 years old. Then, especially around Houston, everyone began to change their approach because he was just killing it. He was truly a young protégé. After that, he played on Kim Burrell's first record and that record changed the landscape of gospel again. It was going more in the direction of a pop, R&B type thing. The grooves were different, the chordal approach was different, and that was an amazing album. I think I had a cool little front row seat because I got to watch all of that stuff as it was happening. Anybody that really knows will tell you that Chris Dave had a lot to do with the evolution of gospel drumming. Period.

The only problem with it is, like with anything else, the interpretation is lost. Let's use the BOX as an example [PVAMU Drumline]. When the BOX was really new during late 80s going into the 90s, everyone was still marching with low snare drums around their ankles and it was a totally different style of drumming. Then the BOX brought this new thing that kind of fused being black [Traditional/Showstyle marching] with being DCI [Drum Corp International] and it started to change the landscape. Now you see people and other bands trying to incorporate that stuff and they don't necessarily do it right, or they don't fully understand the approach. So many of them look like robots or you see guys with their drums hiked up too high and all types of weird things happening because you have people trying to emulate something and they don't understand it. And that's what happened with gospel drumming too. Chris was so phenomenal that everyone thought they had to be like him and they started trying to play all of this stuff and it started to get out of hand. All you ever hear now is everyone trying to play just what you said earlier, at the end of the song on the album, there are these licks and everybody knows this one lick. So now, everybody is trying to re-create that thinking, "I have to play this lick." It just loses the taste. The thing you said before you mentioned the lick was how nasty the groove was leading up to that, and now everybody has forgotten about that part and it's all about the licks and how can I impress you.

LL: You're not the first person to bring up Chris Dave and how he changed the game with the whole BET performance with Mint Condition…

NR: Planet Groove.

LL: Yep, Planet Groove. And Mint Condition played on it. I'd heard it a long time ago and didn't think anything of it but then I saw it again on YouTube®. When I talked to Calvin Rodgers, he brought that up. He said, "There's nobody in gospel drumming…if they say they're a gospel drummer or they play gospel and they saw that and wasn't moved or changed after that…they're lying."

NR: Yep. Exactly.

LL: I never thought about it like that. How would you say playing in church has prepared you for playing in the industry?

NR: One thing that jumps out immediately is knowing how to roll with the punches. One church I played at for years, the pastor was my friend's dad, it was a smaller church but their music department was really good. Andre, he went to PV way back in the day. They did just as all churches do, they would visit other churches on Sunday afternoons and you might walk in and have to play on a couple trashcans and trash can lids. Industry wise, having to jump from all of these different situations, not having a monitor, and other stuff, I've pretty much dealt with every type of musical adversity that you could deal with while playing in church. One of the problems that I'm having on this current tour,

because we have this crazy screen behind us, about 10 panels of LED screens in a weird configuration, if the room is big enough, I can have a sub [woofer speaker] behind me. But if the room is too small, I can't have a sub behind me. I like to have a sub behind me so that I don't have to overplay and I can feel the kick in my back. But I'm not crying about it when I can't have it because that's the kind of stuff that church prepares you for. You just roll with it. That's one big thing and I notice it all of the time. Whenever there is adversity, people just lose it. Right now, we're on tour and I get to use my own gear all of the time. Sometimes we will be out of the country and we'll do one-offs [one day performance and one day off/resting]. We did a show in Hong Kong not too long ago and their backline companies are not going to be as equipped as the companies in the States would be. The stuff that I have on my rider, I didn't get any of it. The first thing everyone does is to come look at me and thinks I'm going to go into diva mode because I have some wack drums. I'm thinking, "just give me a drum key, some moon gel and let's go." I'm not freaked out about that kind of stuff and it came from all of those experiences in church and visiting different churches. You just learn.

Another thing, for instance, the same church that I told you about, it was called Paradise. It was a small church but in the 90s, it just had this reputation. It was the spot where all of the musicals would happen. They had these 3rd Sunday night musicals that would take place and I played there when I was in high school. It was always pressure packed. You would look out in the audience and you'd see Yolanda Adams, you'd see Chris [Dave] out there, you'd see Kim Burrell, I mean everybody who was anybody in the Houston gospel scene would show up to these musicals. That's where I learned how to deal with performance pressure early in my career. The dude Andre who was the minister of music at the church, he was serious about making sure you just played the song and not overplay to impress someone. That was a good breeding ground for me to learn that because you look out there and the first thing you want to do is show what you got when you see all of the people. It was engrained in me early, "Do the job. Make it hype and make it right." Because of that is a reason why me and Chris are so cool. I'm definitely grateful for that. We ended up being super cool down the road and that's like my brother, but when I was younger, I was watching from a distance. It was very clear that he had something special. It was motivating and inspiring. He would be at the musicals, come up to me and ask, "Who are you? Where did you come from?" And it was the opposite of what you would think would happen. Everyone else thinks that if I can play something, or if I can outplay him then I'd get his attention. But I was on the opposite end of the spectrum and that got his attention. Those are probably the two things I noticed the most. A few weeks ago, we did a show in LA and it was streamed live on Yahoo and people were running around nervous. I was just thinking, "I'm not really nervous." I wanted to do a good job, yeah, but I wasn't really nervous. To me, there was no difference to this than the Sunday night musicals with everyone watching. Your reputation is on the line and I get all of that. So I just learned to deal with that junk early.

LL: You said there was the transition during the time between age 8-18 and now that you're in these situations, things are different. Drummers started out playing simple, played the grooves and that's something I notice about the 80s drummers. That era was more so, for the music. Nothing special. Everything was groove based; you played the hits, and it was kind of like jazz. You set up the song and you set up phrases, but now you're getting into more technical stuff. Guys are displaying more chops, they play a lot more notes and things of that nature. What are some of the demands being placed on you as a drummer now? It can range from a list of things. You may program, or even now it seems that everyone has a [Roland] SPDS pad. So what are some of the demands being placed on you as a drummer in today's performance setting?

NR: That's definitely one, as you just said, especially with the kind of music that I play. I play synthetic music so my challenge is always, at least the way I approach the music, my brain is always fixated on doing what is best for the music. And that comes from having good band directors and teachers like "Prof." [Professor George Edwards, Late Director of Bands at Prairie View A&M University] So playing this synthetic music, I don't want it to sound too organic. One of the biggest challenges is trying to figure out how to always incorporate enough synthetic stuff. Even how I approach the notes that I'm playing on the actual acoustic drums, trying to make sure that my tones are really short because it's the synthetic stuff. When you're playing a sample, most of the time the cut off is going to be quick, so I have to make sure my drums are tuned a certain way. I have to make sure that the overtones, decay [sings pitch], are right and they are not too long because it's not that kind of music. Then I have to think about adding synthetic elements to my kit. For me, being innovative is probably another personality thing. I look around and it's like you said, everybody has an SPD [sampling pad]! My first thing was, I don't want an SPD because everybody else has one. So how can I still incorporate the same approach because I have to get some synthetic elements in here, but how can I do it without doing what everybody else does. That's why I came up with building my triggers into my shells. I have a couple of shells on my kit that are regular 10x4 shells, but I built the electronics into them. I use my computer as the brain and so I trigger everything from there so to the naked eye, it just looks like more drums. People are always asking, "Where did you get that? That snare on the side looks dope!" I just say thank you because they don't really know that it's electronic. It is an SPDS just in a different form. That also brings about the idea of making sure that you craft your sounds in a certain way. In the SPDS, there are stock sounds and you can sample them too. But I want to take them a step further than that. What's really cool in this situation is that I have access to the studio where I actually go, sit down with the head engineer dude, pull up the session for the songs and I'll snatch the sounds right out of the session. I get to edit those sounds so that way, whatever I'm using live are the exact same sounds that are on the record. So ultimately it just sounds like the record. Those are definitely some demands. If you want to do it right, you'll have to take a few extra steps but it's a challenge man and I love the challenge.

LL: Earlier in the conversation, you were very critical. You made some comments about people being uneducated. I had a conversation with a guy and I didn't know how I would come across with the question. Yeah, ok, I'm working on my doctorate and everything but my personality is not one of arrogance. I never walk around like I'm somebody special, "Oh, I'm about to be Dr. Lawhorn" or anything like that. I'm just a regular guy. I always say, "I'm just a skinny dude from Ft. Worth [Texas]." Let's just be honest, there are a lot of guys that play and drum that aren't necessarily trained or educated. A lot of people hear Chris Dave but they don't know about HSPVA [High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Houston, Texas] and how he studied at Howard University. How do you feel your education has played a part in your drumming?

NR: It's a huge factor but let's not get it twisted. There are some dudes who have never sat a classroom that can play circles around me. I'm definitely not putting anyone down like that for a lack of education, but in my case, it's huge. At the end of the day, it's learning a certain level of discipline and it's learning the nuances. The little, tiny details about how you can approach things and ideas. Little things like dynamics. That's one of the things that I'm really critical about when it comes to a lot of gospel drummers. I hear dudes that play phenomenal stuff, and let me make sure I make that clear. I'm not saying they can't play because these dudes can play you under the table. But a lot of my problem is, my ears get fatigued when I'm listening to it because there's no use of dynamics, and everything is loud. That's something that my education has afforded me is to be able to clean things up by playing with more control and not playing so loud. I understand what an unaccented note is and those little bits make your drumming grow exponentially. I think its really understanding approach. Being able to create your own approach and define your own approach. I learned that from having good teachers.

LL: That is the one thing that one of my professors told me at Ole Miss. He said, "The reason how I know you can play is because everything you can do loud, you can do it soft as well." I laughed and joked it off but it made sense later on. And again, a lot of it does come down to understanding the role of the drums and the role of percussion in the music. Learning how it fits and dynamics is a big part of it.

The whole part of a dissertation is to make an argument and to back up your argument with reasoning, facts, and suggestions on why it was important. If you were in the room during my defense as a witness and I had to call you up to explain why gospel drumming and gospel drummers are important... and I understand your disdain for gospel drummers, but that's the title that people want to put on themselves now. How would you argue about the relevance of gospel drumming?

NR: Well, those lessons that I learned in church are some of the most invaluable lessons. You can learn to improvise in jazz, which is the place where improvisation is most prominent. But, when I started to dig into jazz, learning to improvise didn't freak me out because I had spent so much time playing in church. You have to follow a choir director

who is improvising and things are just happening on the spot all the time. It's things like improvisation, being able to adjust to situations, surroundings and equipment at your disposure. Those things are really invaluable. No matter what I'm playing, I use those tools all of the time. I'm definitely grateful about getting my start in church. I know a lot of people that didn't start there and those are the things that they really have to work hard at. To me, those things are just natural and have been instilled for so long.

The other greatest tool, the number one, the top of the charts tool is that you understand early on how to appreciate the Giver of the gift. It doesn't matter where I am, it doesn't matter how big the stages are, at the end of the day I understand that what I have is a gift and I know to play from that place. It is never about me and it's always about utilizing my gift. You never know who's listening. The same way I looked up to the guys in church, there's always someone looking at me. You will be inspiring someone and you never know who's sitting out there. They might be the next great drummer that changes the world and changes the art of drumming. That's definitely the greatest tool that I've received from getting my start in church. I know where my foundation is and nothing is more important than that.

Gorden Campbell Interview (December 1, 2014)

LL: How did you get your start in drumming?

GC: Well, I started the same way as most of us did. I started playing in church. I was told that I was about 5 years old. My parents have picture of me on the drum set and I was about that age. As long as I can remember, I've been playing drums. I can't remember a time when I didn't.

LL: Growing up, who were some of your drumming influences inside of gospel music?

GC: Joel Smith, definitely. Gerald Heyward, Jeff Davis, Dana Davis, Michael Williams from *Commissioned*, Kevin Brunson from Milton Brunson and the *Thompson Community Singers*. A lot of times, because I was young, I didn't know who I was listening to. But growing up in a Christian household, a Pentecostal household, we only listened to gospel music a majority of the time. Whether it was something on the radio or just random background music, it was gospel. I was always listening to choirs. I was born in the 70s so it was a lot of James Cleveland, but I was definitely into the *Thompson* Community Singers, which was Kevin [Brunson]. Then I got into *Commissioned*, which was Michael Williams and then Hawkins, which of course was Joel Smith. I'm from New York so Jeff Davis, Gerald Heyward and another guy named Monte Greer. Those were New York guys that were playing with everyone at the time. Another was my first cousin, Al Bolten, was the drummer for Timothy Wright. He was like my hero going up because was playing professionally and he was my family. I used to watch him play with Timothy Wright. He played on a lot of those bigger Timothy Wright records back in the day. Oh, definitely Bill Maxwell too. He was Andre Crouch. Anything Andre Crouch was Bill Maxwell.

A lot of times as a child, you don't know who the drummer is. You just know that you like the song or that's the music that your parents listen to. Growing up playing in church, we learned what all of the new music was and our choir was always singing it. So at a young age I, started playing for the choir at church and I was copying these guys before I even knew who they were. At some point I started reading the credits on the back of records and that's how I figured out who the drummers were.

LL: Who are some of the gospel artists that you played for?

GC: It's funny because I never really played that much gospel. A couple things… I grew up Church of God in Christ [COGIC] so I've known Sput [Robert Searight] and another guy, you may know him. He's in Fort Worth now, has his own choir but he's a drummer too. Myron…

LL: …Butler? Yeah...

GC: No, not Myron Butler but Myron….

LL: …Myron Williams!...

GC: …Yeah, Myron Williams! We all grew up in COGIC so going to conventions is where I met everyone. We were probably 12 or 13 and we were already hanging around the drum set. It would be Sput, Myron Williams, Calhoun, and a lot of other young drummers just hanging around each other. So we go back since we were kids.

Playing in church is really like a professional gig. It's even bigger now with all of the mega churches and TV. But even playing at a small church, it's really kind of professional even though you're not getting paid because you're playing at a real service, in front of people and you can't stop. It's not like a garage band where a lot of other people get their start, with no audience. We grew up playing in front of people. It's a real gig and people get paid to do it now. So we were playing on a professional level, even if it was a small church. We were playing with a choir, with an audience, and with a band that you had to learn how to play with. That's where I got my start. Then I began playing with a group called "Shining Light" which was a group in upstate New York. I was in high school and we would open up at convention for artists like BeBe and CeCe [Winans], Take 6 and whoever came up to that area. That's when I first started playing with a monitor and getting backline equipment. Some of the gospel artists that I played with over the years, the chance came from being in a house band, playing secular music and them just happening to be on the gig. I hadn't really toured with many gospel artists, but I've played for Timothy Wright, Yolanda Adams, BeBe and CeCe Winans. At my church, we played for whoever came through; Donald Lawrence, Dorinda Clark, Karen Clark, Kirk Franklin, Joe Pace, just all kinds of people. We were their band. It was so many over the years that I've literally forgotten.

LL: It's funny that you mention Myron Williams because his brother Steven and I are really good friends, so I guess you can say it's the next generation up. I miss being home because when Myron came out with his group, a really good friend of mine named Aaron Henry, we called him "Lil Aaron" who plays with Tamela Mann now, first started playing with Myron Williams. So I see how things are coming full circle.

GC: I think Bobby Sparks might have told me about him. Is he young?

LL: Well, I'm 31 and he's 35 I believe.

GC: Yeah, I think that's the guy that Bobby Sparks told me about. I played with God's Property for a summer at one point when things got a little shaky and a lot of the guys quit. Sput called me because they were coming to LA and I ended up doing a summer with them. So from there, I got to meet Peebody [Lawrence Ferrell], and Gerald, Braylon

[Lacy], Candy West, Myron Butler, I know all of them. I already knew the Searights from the conventions but that's how I got immersed in the Dallas scene a little bit.

LL: Aww man, you're naming all of the local legends.

GC: Yeah, I know all of them. JT, and of course Bobby Sparks. Lil' Mike is like my little brother. Mike Mitchell.

LL: Man!! Lil Mike's dad taught me how to play!

GC: Are you serious? I know him too!

LL: Dead serious.

GC: I haven't seen him in years but I know him too.

LL: The piano player at my church was named Terri Swift. She would go around doing youth musicals and bring me along to be the youth drummer. I would go with her and people would look at me like "This little guy can't play." But as soon as I got to the drums, I would play. I had to be about 9 or 10 years old at the time. Whenever there were musicals at my church, she would want to make sure the best musicians played. I got a chance to play a few songs but I will never forget, "Thank you Lord", Joel Smith with the crazy, off beat rhythm. I just could not play it. Mike Mitchell, Sr. came and knocked it right out. Mike Sr. would always come and perform at musicals and he always brought his son. Lil Mike was about 2 or 3 years old and already touching the drums. Big Mike said "He's gonna be something one day." And that's crazy.

GC: Yep, Lil Mike is insane.

LL: It's amazing what this guy is doing.

GC: It truly is.

LL: You've talked about your influences inside of gospel, but who were your influences outside of gospel?

GC: Because I'm a child of the 70s and grew up in a Christian household, most of the music I was conscious of was the names I've said already. But in the morning, my mom would have the radio on listening to the traffic report as she got ready for work and I prepared to catch the bus to school. Bands like the Eagles and other top 40 rock groups from back in the day would play. Danny Seraphine from Chicago was one and I didn't know who a lot of people were until I got older. I thought, "Oh, I know that song." After I found out the song and the group, I found out who the drummer was. Steve Gadd of

course, Danny Seraphine, then my cousin Al who played with Timothy Wright turned me on to Omar Hakim, Dennis Chambers, and Vinnie Colaiuta, who's probably my favorite drummer overall. By high school, Dave Weckl's videos started coming out, *Next Step* and *Back to Basics* so I was on the Dave Weckl thing for a while. But the influences are definitely Gadd, Weckl, and those rock drummers like Neil Peart, John Bohnam, and those kinds of guys. I'd heard the music but didn't know who they were for years. Billy Cobham is probably my number one, outside of gospel influence, from the beginning before I knew of anyone else. I went to my cousin's house one in Brooklyn, and he had all of these records on the floor, and about 10 with Billy Cobham. I asked, "Who is this guy," and he said, "Oh, that's Billy Cobham. You gotta check him out." So I saved some money, went to the record store, which is non-existent now, and I got a Billy Cobham album. I didn't even know what it was but I just saw his name on it so I bought it, and I still have it to this day. He was a big influence.

LL: I feel like I'm getting a double portion of this again because I just heard you talk a little about your influences at your PASIC clinic. But I feel that you can't get enough history of who people listened to because I always try and tell younger people this now. When you listen to someone, what are getting from them? Are you getting their licks, are you getting their approach? I'm a huge Calvin Rodgers fan, but when I heard Will Kennedy play I thought, "That sounds like Calvin Rodgers…oh no, Calvin Rodgers sounds like Will Kennedy."

GC: Exactly. Its funny you say that because I put a clip on Facebook and Calvin commented on it. I said, "You know that reminds me of "I Can't Hold it," the Byron Cage song." Later that night, me and Will went to have dinner after his clinic and we started talking about Calvin Rodgers. So I told Calvin that he was shocked. "Ya'll were talking about me?" Yeah man, we were talking about you. Will says you're a beast! For me, I used to ask Calvin about his 12/8 approach and he told me. It was Weckl and Will Kennedy. I immediately heard both of them in his playing but he took it to another level. And because he plays gospel, there's a different edge on it, but you can definitely hear that influence.

LL: I'd like to get some information, which really helps because you're from that area. In my document, I have a section where I breakdown some of the Hezekiah Walker tunes with the Brooklyn inspired rolls from Jeff Davis and Gerald Heyward that really took everyone's playing in a new direction…

GC: You're talking about the East Coast Regional Choir? There's a choir album called *East Coast Regional* that Jeff played on and he is killing. "For the Lord is good." It's an instrumental with Johnathan DeBois, Joe Wilson, another cat named Dewey who was the first person I saw with a 6-string bass from Connecticut and Jeff was on drums. It's really killing…

LL: Ok, well I breakdown and transcribe everything, and talk I call it the "Brooklyn fills" and rolls. As a kid, people called it "thunder foot" saying, "Oh, you have that "Thunder foot." How did that develop in that area?

GC: First, I'm not actually from Brooklyn. Most of my family was in Brooklyn but when my parents got married, they moved to Newburgh, NY, which is about an hour north of the city. But because I was in COGIC, we used to be in Brooklyn all of the time because all of my family was there. So, I'm not actually from Brooklyn. I grew up upstate in Newburgh. With COGIC, there are a lot of state meetings, musicals, and all of that kind of stuff so we were always in Brooklyn. The first person I saw do all of that was Gerald. He played at this church called Institutional COGIC. That church is where Hezekiah came from. James Hall, Butch Heyward, Melvin Crispell, and a lot of other people all came from that church. Back then Gerald wasn't even playing drums. He played the congas as the percussionist, but once he started playing drums he became that child prodigy. Institutional COGIC came to my church once, and my cousin who was with me from Brooklyn said, "If they start shouting, watch what he plays." Of course, in the service they started shouting and he was playing doubles the whole time. It was all about his foot and that was the first person I witnessed to ever do that and it changed my everything! I don't know how old I was, maybe 12 or 13, but from that day on I tried to do what he did. And that's where I first saw it. Now, the first record that I can remember it being on is a song called "Higher Ground" by Timothy Wright with Gerald playing. I used to show it in my clinics because I have the actual album. Gerald does these rolls at the end during the vamp and it's those doubles. I tell a lot of young people, if you know your history, you'll know who the first person was to do something. Joel Smith was doing it way back in the day but Gerald had this thing on it. And that was the Brooklyn thing. He was the first person to really do it, and he was into Steve Gadd. Gerald just made it his own.

Not to get off subject but that's what I think licks are. That's why whenever someone asks how did I do something, I don't hold back. I always show them because they'll never approach it like me. It always sounds a little different just because everyone is their own person. But, the question is hard to answer. Gerald was really the first person I heard doing it and taking it all the way around the drums. Where he got it from? He may say Steve Gadd, but I'm not sure.

LL: I trace it back there and I go through a few transcriptions on how it expanded with changes in voicing, putting it in new meters and a lot of different things. I've been going through quite a bit of material and it was tough to find out who did what. The internet is not clear on some things.

GC: That's the difference with the Internet now. Unless you buy the credits or the album and it comes with the credits, it's hard to do it. Back in the day, everything was on wax and it was on record. So on the back of the record was the credits. You just turned the

record over and read who all played. A lot times they would take pictures and I would just stare at album covers. *Love Alive* with the Hawkins, they took a picture and I would try to see what type of drums they were using or what drum set he was playing. That's why I miss records because that was my inspiration. I would always look at the album cover, especially if it was a choir or something. They would take a picture of the session and you could see the drums in the corner with musicians standing around. That's what inspired me.

LL: How do you feel that gospel drumming has evolved since Joel Smith until now?

GC: I have a couple different things. One, I think it's incredible because the cats can really play. The dexterity and technique that guys have, even if they don't know what its called, if it's a paradiddle or a ratamacue, they don't know. It's just a culture of us playing like that. I love that aspect of it. The part that I don't necessarily like, which I talked about in my clinic, is a lot of times nobody is teaching the cats how to hone that in, make it disciplined and make music out of it. The way gospel chops is viewed now is like a sport. It's like And1 as opposed to the NBA. The And1 dudes are crazy and we love watching it, but I'd rather be in the NBA….

LL: …That's a great analogy…

GC: I can still do all of that, but I'll do it when I'm at the park. But when it's time to work, make a living and make a career, I'd rather be in the NBA. You see the And1 thing didn't last that long. They were on TV for a while, it was dope for a few seasons, a couple of guys made a name for themselves and all of that, but it ended. The NBA has been here for years, you know? And it's not leaving.

The thing for me is, I love the chops and I love being able to do it. Honestly, if you compare us gospel guys to a lot of the rock guys, or even the jazz guys, we have more chops than all of them. Not that we're in a competition or anything but technically, it's so advanced. Even as a little kid. I have little kids that can play circles around a bunch of these professional drummers that's been playing for years. The only problem, nobody is sitting them down, making them play music, honing those chops into making something musical and not just a sport. You can't look like you're about to break a cymbal. You should be comfortable and it should be musical.

LL: Ok, that answers part of another question and I don't want to hold it back until later because you mentioned the dexterity. I'm arguing the importance of why I'm doing this and personally, I know why I feel that gospel drumming is important. But why do feel that, maybe getting a start in church or having a background in gospel playing is important? Why should someone say, "Oh, I'll read this thing about gospel drumming?"

GC: To me its two different things: Spiritually and foundationally because you have a standard no matter how far you go and it's funny because people think differently. A lot of people think, "If it's not gospel, it's sex, drugs and rock n' roll" all the time and it's not. But coming from church, I was more grounded. If I'm out doing a gig and people are doing something that's real crazy, I'm less likely to do it because I have some kind of foundation in my life. As a career and in anything, you want a foundation. You don't want to just live wildly and live on what the next man is doing. If they jump of a bridge, you jump off a bridge. If they smoke, you smoke. I'm not perfect but for me, I'll only go so far before I feel convicted in the spirit and feeling like it's too much and I won't do it. Musically, and I've been saying this forever, playing in church gets you ready to play almost any style. For instance, you can take a rock drummer and put them in church and they sound terrible. You can put a rock drummer in a jazz club, and they sound terrible. You can take a gospel guy, put them on a Latin gig and he can at least play the beat or the basic groove. Songs like "Oh Lord we Praise You," or more up-to-date songs from say Jonathon Butler, that's a Latin groove, an actual Latin groove. So you now know that from playing gospel. You kind of get a head start on being versatile because it's so many different styles. Gospel music encompasses ballads, big power ballads to a CCM [Contemporary Christian Music] rock feel, so you can now play a rock thing. Fusion, all of the gospel stuff sounds like Chick Corea now or the *Yellow Jackets*. You have fusion chops, you have the rock chops, you have some regular and basic gospel chops, and some is even jazzy. You look at some of the James Hall stuff and it's jazzy. In a nutshell, you get a broad scope of a bunch of different styles in church that a lot of other guys don't. Most of the guys that I know who grew up in church, they can play any gig. We can play any style, whereas the other guys can't play church, or they might not be able to play funk. They can play rock but they can't play jazz. Or the jazz guys can play that style, but don't ask them to play any pocket because it's terrible. Even if it's not perfect, the gospel cats can get through something because of our musical experience.

LL: I should have asked this previously but we got into a different line of questioning, but what were some of the first solos that you heard.

GC: Billy Cobham… and I left out a lot of the jazz influence earlier like Buddy Rich. Buddy Rich was famous in the 70s, the 80s and before that too but I was born in '71 so I'm going from there. Buddy Rich was like the best drummer in the world, ever. As a child, I saw him on the Tonight Show with Ed Shaughnessy battling. So it was Buddy Rich, Billy Cobham and Dave Weckl on *The Next Step* video. Straight up drum solos, it was probably those guys.

LL: So how did you view the legends of drumming with Vinnie, Weckl and Steve Gadd drum off?

GC: I thought it was dope! But who do I think won? [Laughter] That's a whole different story! Vinnie is my favorite, all-around drummer of all-time. I wouldn't say he's the best

in every style but just all around, he can play pretty much anything, make it sound authentic and his chops were amazing. Vinnie, Gadd and then Weckl. They're al dope, but Vinnie has that thing.

LL: What's crazy is that I plan to post that video in my defense. Whenever I get a chance to present my information, I plan to show a clip of the so-called "shed sessions" as people want to label them and then the legends video. Some of the same people that say, "Oh, this stuff is not musical and they're not doing anything," are the same people that say, "Oh, Vinnie's killing." They're saying that Steve Gadd is doing all of the musical stuff but nobody else is playing musical. How can you say that some of the same stuff that's happening in this video is not relevant or as musical as it's happening in this gospel video?

GC: Right, it's the same thing. Now on another note because I find myself having to defend it, when people say gospel chops, they say it in a derogatory way. They say it as if they are looking down at it. I'm saying, when you're watching those gospel chops videos and, the actual guys in the videos are not professional drummers. They are amateurs. If you took a couple of amateur rock drummers and put them on the gig, you can't compare them and say that's all rock drummers because you have some young kid shedding on a video. They don't compare. That's like going to a park, seeing some high school kids playing basketball, they can dunk, dribble with tricks and all of that, and saying that's how all basketball players perform? No. If you're going to compare, compare Kobe Bryant and Michael Jordan. Compare the best players. The playing field is not level because most of the guys that are on the shed videos, are young kids that play at church and they're not necessarily the Teddy Campbell's' or the Aaron Spears', or Gerald Heyward's. I don't think it's a level playing field because of the way people are judging them. To me, and I don't like to hear the derogatory statement, most of them have never done a gig before. They've never toured or played with a professional artist, 90 percent of them haven't. There are some good sheds with cats on there but a lot if it is with amateur players. You can't use those amateur players for the whole scope of gospel drumming just like I wouldn't use the amateur basketball players for the whole scope of basketball. Does it make sense?

LL: … Definitely….

GC: … It's like comparing apples to oranges. You can't compare the two. If you're going to say "gospel drummers," use that as a cover to say that this is how gospel drummers play, then use Teddy Campbell. Use Nisan Stewart, use Gerald Heyward, and use Marvin McQuitty or Calvin Rodgers. Those are the cats. If you're going to say "gospel drumming" and this is what gospel drummers do, use those and don't use the amateurs that are just really getting started. That's like saying all rock drummers play like this and the only videos I'm watching are some cats in a garage playing with each other. You can't compare the two. I think when the website came out called "Gospel Chops," that's

where they got it from. The website came and started putting these videos out. The guys that they are using on there are very competitive, it's not really musical so that's why it got a bad name. That's why most of us don't necessarily associate with the whole "gospel chops" movement. I'm a gospel drummer and I grew up in church playing gospel before I played anything else. So compare me and use me to say that this is how gospel drummers play. Don't use the amateurs because they're young, inexperienced and haven't done any gigs yet. Most them haven't even done a single gig. They may front like it and it's easy on the Internet to look like it but within two minutes, you can tell if these guys are professional. Just don't compare professionals to amateurs. Not that all professionals are better but it's just an experience thing. Once you get the experience, you know how to play and you become more musical. You become a polished player. But I think it's gotten a bad name because you're judging the style off of these young cats that are shedding at a church. Nine times of out ten if you watch a shed, it's at a church somewhere. It's nothing wrong with that but they're amateurs and not professionals. Just the top players.

LL: I am definitely going to use that argument and I never thought about it that way. With the expansion of YouTube, the gospel chops website, and people being able to download things, when you think about "gospel chops" or gospel drummers, Calvin Rodgers said it best. He stated that you can type in gospel drummer or church drummer, and look a some guy at a church with a raggedy drum set with a cymbal and floor tom and he's just killing. But is that really what you're going to consider gospel drumming? That's not it. If you want to really look at it, with what I've witnessed, if you look at the top pop and R&B artists, they are using drummers who go their start in church. So what is church doing for the R&B and mainstream community if everybody is using drummers that come from this style? How are they influencing everybody else?

GC: Everybody wants it now. Everybody wants a gospel drummer. They want it. Even if they don't know what it's called, it's the feel. And that's what we never even talked about. The number one thing is the feel, outside of the chops. It's the feel that we have from playing in church, because it's really a heartfelt thing. It's not reading music because we memorize. People trip out that we can memorize all of these songs for a service and most of them can't. They have to read it. If you take music off of the stand, it sucks. It's a wrap. Our whole thing is based on feel. Definitely the chops and the fills in between but that pocket is sweet. That's why I love Gerald Heyward so much because his pocket is crazy. Aaron Spears man, all of us. If you have any of us play a straight 2 and 4, there's a thing on it, a hump on there that a lot of guys don't know where it came from. Even in my clinics, when I talk about the pocket and the grace note thing, the pocket is the key. All of the church drummers have it and it is a feel you cannot explain. From Spanky, to Brian Frasier Moore, Lil' John Roberts, to the new cats coming up at Berkley, if you ask them to play 2 and 4, they know how to swing. It is an innate, cultural swing that they can't copy and that's the thing. That's what gets people gigs. If you have chops on top of it, then you're in the house for those gigs. To me, it really comes down to feel and that's of the utmost importance.

LL: Very important. Ok, what are some of the demands that weren't there maybe 5 or 10 years ago?

GC: I would go back maybe 20 years ago. The number one demand that I can think of is playing with the click [metronome]. Back in the day, there was no machine and you had to just play live. If you listen to the older records, the tempos are all over the place. Listen to any Herbie [Hancock] with Harvey Mason playing and any of the *Earth, Wind and Fire* records. If you listen to the beginning and skip to the end, it may be 3 to 4 notches faster, but it felt so good that you didn't notice. I'm a stickler for tempo and time but it's not an end all-be all for me. If it feels good, I don't really care if it speeds up or not. Human nature is going to speed up when the adrenaline kicks in. I would definitely say the number one thing is being able to play with a click or playing on top of programmed drums. You have to sound locked with the drum machine and can't flam.

LL: Have you been in situations where you've had to program your own drums?

GC: Because I produce and make my own beats and tracks, I do it anyway, especially at church. I do all of the tracking at church. If you're doing a big pop gig, most of the programming comes from the producer of the record and it's all in Protools so you don't have to do too much programming. The programming that I do is not necessarily making beats, but I program my electronics. To get the sounds out of my Yamaha multipad, I have to load them in from Protools to play along with the tracks so that I can play it live. Or if you have a sampler, you're going to have to learn how to program that as well. Electronics and technology, you pretty much have to be knowledgeable of in order to work on a high level.

LL: My final question and your touched up on it a bit, but because you've played in both areas, grew up playing in church, how did playing drums and being a gospel drummer initially prepare you for some of the work for the mainstream artists that you've played with?

GC: Number one, like I said, you're playing in front of an audience already. So when you get a professional gig or tour, you're used to it. My first tour was back in 1993 and I was used to playing in front of big crowds because that's what I did at church. You're not as nervous doing it because you've gained a bit of experience playing in somewhat of a professional environment. Nowadays, a lot of the churches are big mega churches, and they like the church I play at now, are basically professional gigs. We have in-ear monitors, we have soundmen, and we have monitor guys and techs to make sure everything is lined up. Everything is on a screen, everything is recorded, they make TV shows and DVDs, and so we're working on a professional level at an early age. That's definitely what helped me get prepared for outside playing. Musically, just playing so many different styles of songs at church, you're pretty much prepared for anything that comes in front of you.

LL: Ok, absolute last question, I think. How was it going to school with Chris Dave?

GC: It sucked…

LL: …[Laughter]…

GC: … I'm just kidding. It was cool. I'm a year older than him but we just practiced a lot. Actually, what was cool about it, Chris put me on to a lot of music that I didn't know about. That's the one thing that I always say. Dallas and Houston, those performing arts schools and that culture there, the cats come up already blazing. By the time they're 12 or 13 like Lil' Mike's age, they already know all of the jazz and they can play it. Whereas for me, I didn't come up like that. The band at my school, we called it stage band and we didn't play any straight ahead jazz. I didn't play any straight ahead jazz until I went to Howard [University] and I almost didn't get accepted because of that. Being able to read and having technique were the factors that helped me get into the program. I had to learn jazz at Howard. When Chris came, he put me on to all of the stuff that he'd already been through. Players like Jeff "Tain" Watts and Max Roach, Chris was the first person to turn me on to Dennis Chambers. I didn't know who Dennis was until my second year in college. Chambers, Elvin [Jones], Ralph Peterson and Tony Williams, we would just sit there and study. He opened me up to a lot of music that I'd never heard before that he was already entrenched in. By the time he got to Howard, he was a prodigy.

We would also shed and practice all of the time. In the basement of the fine arts building, all of the drummers had their own private rooms to practice in. I had a marimba, a piano and my drum set in the room. Sometimes we'd roll the piano in the hall, Chris would bring in a kick, snare and hat, and we'd just go for it. He had such a different style because I'd really come from playing in church. He came up playing church but he was playing jazz too.

When he came to D.C., he was Yolanda Adams' drummer. He would literally go home and do gigs with Yolanda Adams. He was playing gospel but he knew all of the jazz from going to HSPVA [Houston School of the Performing and Visual Arts]. They were so much more advanced than us. Even guys like Sput [Robert Searight], Braylon, the whole high school; they were turned on to some stuff that I'd never heard of until I got to college. He just opened my ears. From the Funk, the loud jazz with John Scofield with Dennis Chambers playing on it, to the P-Funk All-Stars Live, to Wynton Marsalis and *The Black Codes* with "Tain" playing, I didn't know what any of that was until I started hanging with Chris. It definitely helped me sharpen my skills.

It's funny; before I first met him I'd been hearing about him over the summer. "Oh, this kid Chris Dave is coming and this dude is a beast. Just wait 'til you hear him." He came to D.C. and I guess he sat in at some jazz club and the word was all around town. "Man, Chris Dave, you gotta hear him. He's on some other stuff." So I finally met him one day

in the fine arts building as I was coming out of the band room and he was sitting on the floor. I speak to him, "Oh you're Chris? I'm Gorden… what's up?" So he says what's up, is real chill and I ask him to go play. We go down to shed, and I start playing whatever it was not to show off but to be friendly because he's the new guy, and he wouldn't play. He wouldn't even get on the drums and I'm thinking I'm killing. A day or two later, I finally saw him play and I thought…Aww man. I was so embarrassed. I'd actually played in front of him thinking that I'm sweet on the kit, and I saw him play? Aww man, I said I'd never do that again! It was a friendly thing. He was cool and didn't say anything negative, but I kept asking him to play he just responded with a "nah." But when I heard him play? I got it. Ok. Nevermind. Back to the drawing board. But we've been cool every since then and really good friends.

LL: You just don't know how much I truly appreciate this. A lot of drummers always say, "Learn your history" and I've done my best to try and learn it but going through this process, I've learned even more. I want this research to come out in an academic way, but to also let people know how relevant black churches are, growing up in church, black drummers and a lot of other things, but it's just not a lot of people getting drums together and beating around.

GC: We are the only players still doing it because schools really don't have music programs anymore so there aren't a lot of young kids buying snare drums. The only people that are still doing it are the church guys because we need cymbals and snares at the church. Actually, I'm in the position now and PASIC helped out too, where I can speak to companies directly. Because of playing secular music, I'm in the door where I have their ears and I can tell them things they need and want to hear. At a dinner with people from Yamaha and the Zildjian family, we just sat and talked. They said how they were discontinuing items because people just aren't buying them anymore. I flat out said it to them: The only people who are really buying the stuff are church guys. We have this thing called the inspiration pack from the Rhythm Alliance, through Zildjian as a box set of cymbals, and they actually talked to me about what cymbals people played at church. They wanted to know what cymbals should be included if they put a pack together that was pointed towards houses of worship. I told them my personal preference: A K-ride, and A-Custom or K crashes. A lot of guys use it because they see us use it. The companies listen to us and made a box set. Even last week, they informed us that people aren't buying drums like they used to and I had to let them know something. The one area where it's never going to die in terms of the business aspect is gospel. You guys are going to have to cater to the gospel drummers. I don't know if you've noticed but over the last few years, things are beginning to change. I play Vater sticks and they now have a gospel series. That's primarily because of me, Nisan [Stewart] and Cora Coleman. Because there aren't a lot of schools and everyone is learning how to program on a computer, nobody is playing real instruments as much as they were back in the day. So their sales and business, which translates to money, is going down. Church guys are still buying gear because we need it because there are millions of churches in all of the major

cities. In Los Angeles, there are at least 500 to 600 churches with drum sets. At my church, we have multiple rooms and there is a drum set in each room. There's a choir room, the main sanctuary and the side sanctuary. I used to play Pearl so we have pearl kits in every room, racks and Zildjian cymbals everywhere. And that's just my one church where we have three full sets right now. So if you go to the larger churches in the city, all of us have multiple sanctuaries and similar set ups. People are buying gear and it's the church guys. I'm telling the presidents of these companies, "You really have to do something that caters to the gospel people because they are the one's constantly playing and buying equipment." They see it and have to respect it.

Your argument is something I've been saying for years. Even with drummer world site. I hit up guy and mentioned to him how he had all of these categories, but you don't have gospel drumming. That's the biggest influence in today's music. Rock might have Travis Barker and a few other guys but that's about it. Everyone else besides that are apart of the older generation such as Bonham, Charles Watts and guys in their 50s. That's who the rock guys are looking up to, in general. But in gospel, you have Aaron Spears, Teddy Campbell, Nisan, Gerald Heyward, and Calvin Rodgers. We haven't even talked about Terry Baker with all of the records he's played on, and LaDell Abrams. I mean there're so many guys that are playing on big records. Marvin McQuitty, that people still recognize that are relevant today. Marvin, even in his death, people still talk about him and he's not even here anymore. They have to recognize and I think they have. We've kind of paved the way. I tell Lil Ronald Bruner and Thomas [Pridgen], they weren't around back in the day. But even the newer guys, I even talk to guys like Aaron Spears. I'm not sure if you've ever been to the NAMM show but back in the day, we were already playing. I was playing with *Earth, Wind and Fire*, and I was already touring with everybody for years. We were getting NO LOVE at NAMM! We had endorsements and the companies knew us, but we weren't doing autograph signings and they weren't putting any posters up of us. It was more so of them saying "Thanks for playing our equipment, we appreciate you" and simply a pat on the back, whereas the other guys were getting posters and a lot of other things. I feel like we helped pave the way to get gospel drummers hooked up because now, there are a lot of gospel drummers with endorsements and they are getting adds in magazines. But back then, we weren't getting anything. We would maybe get some drums, maybe, but that was it. So now, the way it has opened up for a lot of other guys to get things that we didn't have back in the day. We aren't the only guys, but I think we were the next generation of guys that came and were working on a professional level that the companies had to respect. I worked for 10-11 years before the guy from Zildjian hit me up saying, "Man, you're really keeping busy." I'm thinking, Man… I've been keeping busy for 10 years on a high level! Every TV show and everything. But it took them that long to recognize me. I'm looking at the phone like "What? Are you kidding me?!?" But that's just the nature of the beast. But because we did that, I think it opened up a lot of doors for a lot of the younger guys to even ask about endorsements. Now, companies are calling and asking, "Do you know this

Calvin Rodgers guy? Do you know Mike Mitchell?" They're calling us now and asking about these guys because they know that we are reputable. My bad man, I talk a lot so…

LL: Oh, no! I'm the same way, trust and believe. But if someone is talking and it's valuable information, I listen. I listen. Especially if it's someone I look up to. It caught me off guard watching one of your clips because I didn't know people that played open handed or left handed, until I saw you play. So now, I don't hinder students who play open handed. I tell them to go and check out Gorden Campbell.

GC: It's beyond me. I didn't know Will Kennedy, Lenny White, Billy Cobham, they all play left handed. Chuck Morris on Arsenio, who was big influence back then, because we would all watch the Arsenio Hall show and dude would always give him a little spot. Every night he'd say, "Gimmie some of that funk" and Chuck would play.

LL: This whole experience has been eye opening. Learning how people grew up, then gathering their opinions and it seems that everyone is the same way. The first person I was set to interview was Sput. I caught him at a Snarky Puppy gig here in North Carolina but we've yet to catch up. Everyone has done the same: I approach them about the subject, let them know my name and it's chilled. But as soon as I say "history of gospel drumming," everyone immediately says YES! Because it's not out there and it needs to be said like this. My goal is to adequately put this information out there in a positive light and that it reflects the true intention of us gospel drummers and showcases you guys that are doing it on a higher level that this is what gospel drumming is really about. This is how it got to be what it is.

GC: And that's the key. Part of it goes to the racial component because some people just assume that we can't do anything. Even if they don't consciously do it, there's still an underlying of it. Every time I teach anywhere, especially somewhere like PASIC, there aren't many of us involved. I assume that they think I'm an idiot so that's why I speak so clearly. Even on my DVD, my 13-year old daughter was clowning me. She was asking me, why do you sound like a white guy? I said to her, I just really wanted to speak clearly across the board. I didn't want to speak slang. I wanted to speak clear and be knowledgeable about what I am teaching. I want to get respect and to me that's the way you do it. I'm always conscious of that. Especially at something like PASIC because it's really rudimental and educational, the guidelines are strict and I just want to make sure they know. Will Kennedy even mentioned it to me before he left Indy. He said, "Man, It's only a couple of us and we have to keep this up. I'm really proud of you with the way you are presenting it." It's still soulful and it's still me. But I speak clearly, don't have to use much slang, and just be real. But I make it so that everyone knows that we are intelligent.

Aaron Henry interview December 2, 2014

LL: How did you get your start in drumming?

AH: Well, I got my start in drumming from my father. He was musician and played guitar but he also knew rhythms. I picked up a lot of my drum playing from his guitar rhythms. I had a friend named Matt James that taught me how to play a little bit but I learned the most from my father. He taught me a whole lot.

LL: Who were some of your drumming influences inside of gospel music outside of your father?

AH: Inside of gospel music, the influences were Joel Smith who played for the Hawkins. Robert Searight, everyone knows him from God's Property and a lot of other artists. Peebody, which his real name is Lawrence Ferrell, I watched his playing a lot growing up. Teddy Campbell, Calvin Rodgers, and I know I'm missing a few people. I can't remember the name of the guy who played for Donald Lawrence…

LL: Coon? Calvin Napper…

AH: Yeah, Coon. That's him. Calvin Napper. Basically, those were my favorites.

LL: Who were some of your influences outside of gospel?

AH: Band wise, it was Mint Condition. When I first heard Mint Condition it blew my mind. It changed my whole aspect on playing and how to approach music when I listened to them because of the way they played. Chris Dave was a big influence, Teddy Campbell again, Nisan [Stewart] because I love his pocket. I love the way he approaches R&B music. Gorden Campbell, his approach and feel in pop music, R&B is very interesting. Lil' John Roberts and Dennis Chambers, everyone knows Dennis Chambers funk and all of that. Carter Beauford as well. I like the way he plays with Dave Matthews Band. Omar Hakim was big for me too.

LL: Man, you named some people! Who are some of the gospel artists that you've played for?

AH: Some of the artists are Anita Wilson, Tamela Mann, Myron Williams and Juanita Bynum. I've played for Marvin Sapp on a couple of occasions. Dorinda Clark and I know I'm missing a few others.

LL: Hey, that's quite a resume right there.

AH: Not quite but I'm thankful.

LL: Ok, who are some of the artists that you've played for outside of gospel?

AH: Outside of it would be Jon B., a lady named N'Dambi who's very neo-soul. Nayrock, she's R&B and rock. Her name is Koryan Wright, she's Erykah Badu's sister.

LL: Who were some of the groups and artists that you listened to growing up?

AH: One of the groups was a quartet group named the Keynotes and my dad was one of the original Keynotes. He played guitar and bass for the group. My family was already into the gospel scene because of my dad. John P. Kee, Donald Lawrence, The Clark Sisters, Hezekiah Walker, Kirk Franklin, Fred Hammond, and I could keep going….

LL: [Laughter] So you were just engulfed in gospel music?

AH: Right. Pretty much from the start.

LL: Do you remember any specific fills or solos that helped your playing?

AH: I would say the solos from *In the Pocket* from the Dennis Chambers video. LaDell Abrams did a couple of solos with John P. Kee. Calvin Rodgers as well. Chris Dave did a solo on Kim Burrell's album. Musically, I always loved the way Chris Dave approached solos, or anything else. I used to watch old clips of Buddy Rich that caught my attention when he used to do solos with his band. Those really stood out to me.

LL: The big question that I'm really trying to answer is, how do you feel that gospel drumming has evolved? You named quite a few people so let's say from Joel Smith to Calvin Rodgers or from your earlier years to now, how do you feel that gospel drumming has evolved?

AH: It's evolved in a major way. I think when you say gospel music, it's pretty much everything. Blues, Rock, Hip-hop, R&B and Pop, everything is put into gospel music as a whole. And the drummers are playing exactly what the music calls for. As far as the way it has advanced, I think that drummers now are extremely aggressive. Back then drummers played but things began to change around the 90s or so with all of the licks. I think drummers now can sometimes be over aggressive instead of playing the music. That's another way that it's evolving. There are a lot of changes going into R&B and gospel so drummer are being more aggressive in the open spaces and taking more liberties with their fills. I think the way the music has changed has evolved the drummers to become more aggressive.

LL: You're 35 now and you began playing for artists when you were around 17 or 18 right? What are some of the demands that are being placed on you as a drummer within gospel music that weren't there before?

AH: I think mainly, the drummer's position now is leading the band into changes where that used to fall with the keyboardist. Now, the drummer is taking on that role of leading the band into the next section. Being able to play with a click track is very important now, which you really didn't have to worry about that back in the day. I mean, they really didn't play with click tracks back in the day. The drummer just kicked it off and kept the tempo. Now, you're playing with a click track, performance tracks, and you really have to be on your Ps and Qs. Playing the song is more important and seems to be lost. When you're a drummer, learn the song. You can't fake your way through songs now. If a drummer doesn't know it, the musicians, the artists and the audience will know it. Back in the day, you could fake through it but now you have to learn the songs. You have to play the songs and play them right.

LL: That is a 100% true! I did a bit on shout music, how it used to be really simple and now we have these grand productions.

AH: I feel like shout music has evolved in a major way! [Laughter] As you said, it used to be simple back in the day. Now, it's a lot different. Everyone wants to play different changes in shout music. You might even hear Sesame Street in shout music now … [laughter]

LL: … [Laughter] …

AH: It has evolved a lot! There jazz in it and you might even hear jazz changes in shout music now. They might play straight ahead starting off and you might not even know. You listen and think, "this is shout music? Oh wow!"

LL: It's just so much. It seems that everything is taking on something of itself and you have to really work to keep up. How do you feel that playing in gospel and growing up in gospel prepared you for mainstream?

AH: My dad stayed on me, 24/7. 24/7! Constantly. He basically prepared me for being a professional and learning how to carry myself. I had to learn how to be approachable for people. I definitely went through things that prepared me to perform and play all of the various gigs inside and out of gospel. It was the best training ground because when it came time for me to play with other artists, I was definitely prepared. Truly prepared.

LL: What type of situations prepared you?

AH: I would say my time playing with Darryl Blair first game me a lot of learning material. I got the chance to play with people like Jerome Harmon who is now a big time producer with Justin Timberlake. I got the chance to play with Kermit, he was a big influence in showing me how to approach different things and learning how to play in big environments. Also, Sput [Robert Searight] took me under his wing and showed me a lot.

LL: I can just remember being in that atmosphere with people like Darryl Blair, knowing that he did things with Kirk Franklin. So when you get in there with them, they expect a high level of professionalism, a high level of playing and that's the only way. Otherwise, you'll get cut.

AH: X! You will be out there!

LL: So here's the important question, as a mainstay in the industry right now, why do you feel that gospel drumming is important?

AH: I feel that gospel drumming is important for a few reasons. Not only is it important for you to learn how to play gospel music, but also it's important because you can minister to people through your playing. There may be some one out there watching me play that's getting healed from my playing. There may be some one out watching me play that want's to play gospel music like that one day. Gospel music is important because it helps you with different genres of music as well.

LL: How so?

AH: A lot of people want to say "Oh, those are nice gospel chops" when you're playing R&B music but if you look at it, in today, R&B mirrors everything in gospel and uses gospel fills. You have R&B taking from gospel now when it used to be gospel taking from R&B.

LL: That was another question I brought up. Who's influencing who? It used to be so one sided but now it's vice versa.

AH: Definitely vice versa and that's mainly because of the R&B people are going to get the gospel musicians. If you look at it, most of these guys, they won't admit it and try to deny that they're gospel musicians, but most of the R&B musicians come from gospel. And to this day, they are still playing gospel. My whole thing is, how can you say you're not a gospel musician when you came from gospel to R&B? And you still play at services on Sundays?

LL: That is very true! What are some of the demands being placed on you as far as electronics?

AH: Initially, I didn't have to use it that often. I have lately but I wasn't using it that often until this year. I use an SPDS pad and it's quite different from the acoustic kit. You're so used to playing regular shells but now you have to add in the electronics. The different part is finding the sounds to fit with the track that's already running. That's the most important part because it changes your playing. It makes you become a little more disciplined. I've gotten a lot better at it but when I first started, it was very difficult. I was

trying to figure out how to put everything in its right place to make it gel. Once you get the sounds down then it's straight.

LL: It seems like the more I talk to people the more I realize something like this should have been done a long time ago.

AH: Yeah man. This needs to be heard. Thanks for stepping out and trying to get these voices heard.

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When the conversation turns to modern gospel drumming, his name is the first to be mentioned, and always with deep respect. Ladies and gentlemen, the groove is here.

Jeff "Lo" Davis is one of gospel music's most recorded drummers, maintaining first-call status for live and studio sessions since the 1980s. His album credits include the debut recordings of some of the genre's biggest stars, including Kirk Franklin, Vickie Winans, Richard Smallwood, and Hezekiah Walker. As one of the first drummers to cross over from gospel to hip-hop and R&B, Davis is the pioneer of a playing style that has made its way around the world in pop and other forms. His influence is far reaching, and his tasteful, solid, innovative drumming can be heard in the playing of many of today's most well known drummers. MD recently spoke with Davis about gospel drumming's past and future, and his role in both.

MD: You're one of the most recorded drummers in the history of gospel music. How did you achieve this status?

Jeff: I believe that God was guiding my career and always blessed me to be in the right place at the right time. I started out playing in my church in Jersey City after watching the deacon play for years. As I got older, I began playing for different church choirs and singing groups in my area. I wasn't allowed to do anything musical outside of the church when I was growing up, so I was constantly looking for opportunities to play in the setting my mother approved of. While I was still in high school, I started playing with a couple of traveling choirs and groups such as the New Jersey Mass Choir [which sang on the Foreigner hit "I Want To Know What Love Is"] and a group called Paradise. We traveled the East Coast and the Midwest. It seemed like the more I played and got around, the more people heard me and wanted me in their band or on their record. It was a tremendous blessing, and I give all the credit to God.

MD: Who were some of your musical influences?

Jeff: I listened to a lot of jazz and played along with different jazz records. When Jaco Pastorius came out I started getting heavily into that music. Steve Gadd was a major influence. I listened to different local drummers that I grew up with. There were certain things that everybody on that scene used to do on the kit, and I definitely took part in that and was influenced by it to a certain degree. I loved Motown, the old-school funk drummers like James Brown's drummers, Diamond from the Ohio Players, and George Brown from Kool & the Gang. I was influenced by singers, especially Al Jarreau, and by people who played other instruments. I studied different methods of playing time, like

playing the pulse versus playing on the beat. I listened to how people would color the music and picked up things here and there that I was able to make into my own sound.

MD: When did you get your first big break?

Jeff: I was playing with Paradise, and we did a concert with Richard Smallwood. At the time Richard was playing piano, and he had a bass player and a drummer. There were only three of them, but they sounded like a much larger group. I was very impressed. So a couple weeks later I got a call: "Hello, Jeff, this is Richard Smallwood...." And I'm like, "Man, get outta here. Who is this?" I thought one of my friends was playing a prank on me. Ultimately I was convinced that it was Richard for real. The current drummer wasn't able to do some dates, and they wanted me to fill in. That was the mid-1980s, and I've been working with Richard ever since. By working with Richard, I was able to meet many of the other artists and producers that I went on to work with, including Vanessa Bell Armstrong, the Winans, John P. Kee, Tramaine Hawkins, Walter Hawkins, Shirley Caesar, and Thomas Whitfield. I ended up playing with all of those people extensively because of Richard.

MD: What separated you from the other drummers who were coming up at the time?

Jeff: I worked hard to have my own sound. Some guys sounded sloppy when they played. A lot of guys could play a big roll on the toms-we used to call them tiger rolls-and most of the time they wouldn't come out on the 1, or they'd get lost in the middle of it. I never wanted to sound like that. I listened to what the guys around me were playing and practiced avoiding things I didn't like. And I was constantly looking for opportunity. People would call me to ask if I could play for their group or on their record-for instance, I did a lot of uncredited recordings for Savoy Records-and I never said no.

MD: With younger drummers there's often a lot of energy and a desire to blaze away. How did you learn not to overdo it?

Jeff: Before I started traveling with different groups, I was playing for special programs and events at several churches. A lot of traditional Baptist churches didn't have drums back then, so people would be nervous that it was going to be too loud. I never wanted people to look at me and go, "Shhh!" So I focused on being more of an accompanist than a distraction. And instead of people complaining, they'd talk about what a good job I'd done and invite me back. Those things stayed with me. In church, there's always going to be the hype crowd in the corner by the band going, "Whoo!" every time someone plays a cool lick or something. That stuff is cool for people who are looking for it, but it usually takes away from the music.

MD: You've played on some very important gospel records. What was the secret to being able to adapt your playing to so many different artists and musical styles?

Jeff: There was no secret to my playing. I just tried to do what the music called for. I have a saying: "God on 2 and 4. He is the rhythm of life." When I hear music that I'm going to record, I start by stripping everything down to just 2 and 4. Once I hear the other parts of the song and the vocals, I can build around what's being said lyrically or maybe play off something on the bass, guitar, or keys. If there are certain things that are established as having to be in there, I'll stay true to that. But I always think about the music in terms of what it needs to carry it over to the next level. That's why listening to a lot of different music is helpful. I'll hear a track, and it might trigger a thought about another tune where a particular feel or pattern worked, and then I'll apply that to the drum part.

MD: On "King Of Glory" with James Hall, your feel and your intro and ending fills became the standard for gospel drummers across the country. Did you know you were setting up a new style of drumming at the time?

Jeff: I was just doing what felt good, so for most of the tune I focused on grooving. The lead-in on the intro and the lick at the end were just the extra stamps on it. I wasn't trying to change the game. That sound was already evolving in and around New York. I just put it out there for the rest of the country to hear about.

MD: On Richard Smallwood's "Anthem Of Praise," you introduced toms to gospel in a way that hadn't been done before. That song helped change the direction of the genre. How did you come up with those parts?

Jeff: It goes back to "What does this need?" In some of my time off the road, I worked in some of the playhouses on Broadway, where I had to play timpani and auxiliary percussion, and I had my toms tuned to line up with the piano or other instruments at certain parts of the show. I brought that approach to "Anthem Of Praise" because it was such a big-sounding song, and it called for that.

MD: Please talk about pocket, chops, and musicality. How does a drummer develop each one and do it right?

Jeff: Being in the pocket starts with being able to keep good time and knowing how to make the music groove. A real groove happens when the drummer doesn't need to stick his head out. Building your time is essential. Players have to be conscious of whether they rush the beat when they're excited or drop the tempo if they aren't. Working with a metronome will help with that. The pocket is the comfort zone, and as the drummer it's our job to keep that together for all the other people on the stage.

Chops are like language. If you want to speak properly, you have to know the rudiments. They're the words you use to put sentences together and make statements. Speaking properly on the drums means not forcing something into a space where it's not needed.

Musicality is about giving the song what it needs. You have to ask yourself if what you're saying in a song is worth saying. When you go to play something, ask yourself, Why do I want to play this? If the answer isn't a good one, don't play it. It's cool to push the bar, but never past the vocal or the melody.

MD: How have the changes in the music industry affected the potential to have a long-term career and earn a living playing only gospel?

Jeff: I admit it would be hard. There aren't as many artists working consistency at that level as there used to be. For cats with the right commitment and skills, though, there's still room.

First off, gospel drummers can't look to the church for their main income. Many churches pay their bands, but you have to look at it more like a stipend for your assistance to the ministry rather than a salary.

Second, you must know various styles. We have to stop playing "sounds like" when it comes to different styles and do the homework to really know what the drums are supposed to sound like-for instance, if you're playing a rock feel, a blues feel, swing, and so on. You need to know the difference between salsa, samba, Afro-Cuban.... We have to learn to authenticate these different styles. In terms of choosing professional situations as a Christian, you have to know what gig you can and can't do, because some gigs aren't for everybody. And you have to be available to audition.

MD: How have you achieved such longevity and relevance?

Jeff: Gospel music is supposed to tell the good news of Jesus Christ. Every song we play should push people closer to God. The success I've had is due to verticality. When I play, I send my efforts up to God and ask Him to bless what I do and let it bless the people who hear it. In terms of staying relevant, I love to hear what's happening in music that's cutting edge. I constantly listen to other genres besides gospel and get a lot of inspiration there. I think longevity is divinely ordained. Our part in that is to have a mindset of determination. Your mind, your mouth, and your actions must all say the same thing.

MD: What suggestions do you have for players looking to learn more about gospel music?

Jeff: I'd say come in with a clear head and be respectful to the music. Gospel music is influenced by a lot of different styles. There's blues, rock, R&B, and other styles that are all part of the sound, but gospel isn't a mutt. It's an authentic style that is unique to those of us who grew up in this tradition.

MD: What plans do you have for the future?

Jeff: I'm still playing with Richard Smallwood and working in the studio. I'm working with Gon Bops on the new gospel tambourine. I have a music project I'm working on called J-Band. It's made up of some of my good friends that also play in the gospel industry. The first album is going to feature straight-ahead arrangements of some of my favorite gospel hymns. There are several other things I'm working on too, so be on the lookout. I truly believe the best is yet to come.

Jeff “Lo” Davis DVD Interview Transcript

What Does Gospel Drumming mean to you?

JD: Gospel drumming to me has been my life. That’s what drumming is to me. It has been my life. My desire is to see gospel recognized as a genre the same as jazz, rock or R&B. For the most part it was undesignated for a long time and interlocked into the R&B realm because there was no one notable to document it. Now we have this surge of phenomenal musicians in mainstream. Every mainstream gig has a church guy, or a guy who was trained in church, in the drum seat. That has to say something about the contribution of the church as a training ground. Everyone does not have to leave [the gospel scene/church] and I think that’s what is important to me. While I live as a Christian, we work as professional musicians and I don’t want to see gospel guys not get it. So the more we educate them, the more they grow and just become profession musicians and don’t have the moniker of being a “gospel guy.” They just become professional musicians. The bar is being lowered when you’re acknowledged as “just a gospel guy” because just a gospel guy can only do certain things. A professional musician is well rounded, so if he needs to play Afro-Cuban he can do that. If he needs to play heavy metal, he may not be well versed in it, but he knows enough to cover it. Whether it’s straight ahead, pop, you name it; a professional musician is called to be able to play all of those things. We have not allowed the gospel musician to grow enough in our background to teach them all of that. And while that music is a combination of all those things, we haven’t been taught to authenticate styles. So when you see a gospel drummer, the first thing you will note is that he’s holding his sticks matched grip, and all of his accents are usually with his foot. That’s a way you can zoom in on him really quickly. I ‘d love to see that change and watch guys become more well rounded. Of course there are a lot of jazz guys who have light feet as well, and there’s not thing wrong with that. Nothing wrong with having light feet and fast hands or fast feet and light hands, but the working guy is the person who can do it at a level of a proficiency that can keep him working. I’d love to see gospel grow to that professional level. That’s what gospel is to me. When I was coming up, I was one of the first guys in the metropolitan area to bring drums into a lot of the churches. I grew up in Jersey City and there were no drums in churches really. I started to do choir anniversaries and you’d bring the drums in and the older ladies would say “Are you gonna beat those drums loud?” and I took that personally. So I always played to accompany and never to make noise because learned from going to my grandmother’s Baptist church. The ladies asked “Is he gonna make a lot of noise?” She would answer, ‘That’s my grandson and he’s not gonna make noise” and I always carried that with me. I’m still offended by the glass barriers, those fish tanks. I don’t like those. To me, that means the soundman doesn’t want to work hard but that’s just me but we have these kind of discussions at my church. “If you would work out your EQ, then I wouldn’t need this,” while the sound man responds, “well you guys play too loud.” And to me, that’s an insult because while there are a lot of styles that do play loud, to me a musician is a guy who can sit in the pit on Broadway, or play at the

meadowlands if he needs to, and everything in between. Church calls for that because now you have these mega churches that seat 5-8,000 people, you have Christian music that's rock oriented, but then you have contemporary music that's R&B oriented, you have the rap, and the hip-hop. You have all of these inflections that they call gospel but the traditional stands true to the original style. Which is why I was overwhelmed at Daniel Glass' presentation because he was playing what we call shout music and he was around 160bpms. And we live around 150, 160 even sometimes 168-170. Funny thing is, Gerald's [Heyward] church, they used to have church in the basement, they were around 180 bpm all of the time, and I think that contributes to Gerald having an incredible foot. They might've went from 180 to 190bpms sometimes. They used to take the drum machine, put on a clap track, play and to see how fast you can go. So you get to about 220, and then you're over into the drum and bass guys' area and I don't know how they do it.

There are so many guys that need the information so they can grow. For a long time, there was no information for gospel guys so they migrated to whatever they liked. They may listen to what rock guys are doing, jazz or R&B, and lent themselves to that but they really didn't identify with it because they were church guys. So now, with the popularity of the church guys coming on, you have this hype and misinformation. It's destroying the opportunities because many of the players don't have the integrity to hold down a gig and that's bad. I've been privy to a lot of bad stories of guys having opportunities and losing them because of what they thought. I think there's no better way than to get this information out so guys will know. Listen, if you get a job or you're fortunate enough to get endorsed by a company, honor the company by being a good representative. It's a two-way street and you earn what you get. Just because you can play a few tricks doesn't mean you get free gear. A lot of times, they've made those mistakes and a lot of companies are afraid. They don't even want to deal with these guys. I think if guys are well informed, they will handle themselves better. Don't go to NAMM thinking you'll get an endorsement. That's not what NAMM is for. While some guys have found success at NAMM, that's not ideally what it's for.

You have a major city breakdown of gospel entities or gospel churches. You have St. Louis who breeds phenomenal gospel drummers, Detroit, and Chicago. You have Oakland, California and the San Francisco area, which I attribute to the Tower of Power days, Grand Central Station and of course L.A. Then you have a pleathera of guys in Texas, both Houston and Dallas… Shout out to Chris Dave, who's the other color guy that just changed some things, and he comes from the gospel ranks as well. Then over to New Orleans, and there's some traditional guys in Mississippi, Atlanta, with another traditional realm in Miami, up to Orlando and Jackson. That's another style. Charlotte, Virginia and North Carolina somewhat mix in together. Washington and Baltimore, which was the go-go era, then you have Philly, which was the soul thing, and then you come into New York. New York, New Jersey and Connecticut are bunched together. Now, when you take all of these areas, they all have different styles and sounds even just

in churches. How they play their music, how it flows and how their service goes, they are all different. I was blessed to visit all of those [areas] in the 80s because of traveling with different gospel artists. I was able to meet a lot of the earlier heroes. If you go to Detroit, you would hear about a guy named Dana Davis, Michael Williams, and Joseph Joe. There were guys like Ray Bady and other guys in Chicago. The list goes on and on. I'm trying to do a breakdown of the different regions and name the heroes from the 60s on to the present. I think it would help us identify a lot of the good stuff that has on records. Two of my heroes in New York are Derrick Scofield and a guy named Edgar Meeks. You'll never hear about them and they were incredible drummers. And then, there was Bill Maxwell who played with Andre Crouch. Bill Maxwell was my hero because Bill played drums but then he was the engineer on all the sessions and he co-produced all of the records with Andre. Now Bill is doing TV shows, he's done the music to "Martin," and all of these other TV series so he keeps reinventing himself. That's what we really need to chase as gospel guys. To sort of reinvent yourself and to always be creative because if God is as big as we say He is, there's always gotta be room to make things bigger.

What are the requirements for a gospel drummer?

JD: The first requirement is to be on time and be prepared to play a hymn or an anthem, a contemporary song, or a traditional song. And playing a hymn or an anthem might mean not to play it. Knowing when to embellish and when not to, and to be sensitive to what goes on during the service. What we call my church service is sort of a flow; they call it a "flow church." It may deviate from one thing or the other and it may not be exactly the same all the time. We may do a song that song catches fire and instead of it being a three-minute song, it becomes a 15-minute song. The congregation is marching with the flags, rejoicing and everything. You have to be prepared to stretch it or know when to cut it off. There have been a lot of times where the MD [music director] is like "Ok *gives the sign to cut it*" and I now have to cue the bass player that we're ending right here…Boom, let's get out. The singer doesn't get that cue; we [as musicians] get that cue. That's just a few of the things. You have to pay attention and do your homework. You have to know the arrangement, not just the beat, not just the groove, not where the accents go but the full arrangement. You need to know this so that if you have horn players there or a guitar player, you don't need to step on anyone's toes. It's really top shelf stuff. You don't just come in, blow over it and play what you want to play because you'll never come there again. There are places that are more liberal, but if you had to fill my chair or a lot of the chairs that I'm familiar with, you have to be pretty good, well versed, and disciplined. You can't play what you want. It's not a "Let me blow over this, let me show you what I've been practicing for 8 hours all week." No, you play for the music. I think that as drummers, you can play stuff and it just feels good because you have your placement right, you subdivided right, all of your odd time is right on and it sounds great to us but to the average listener it's like "What in the world is he doing? He's jumping over here and jumping over there and doing this nonsense" and that's my mom talking. At a younger

age, when I played I wanted venture out. I want to play in 5, but the song is in 4 but I want to make it sound good in 5 and when I get home my mother would get on me. "What are you doing? You're jumping all over the place. That don't sound like music!" I learned that at an early age and sometimes the younger guys say, "Uncle Jeff, you're preaching to us again!" I just want you to get it so you don't lose the next gig. I've had a blessed career, I've been really fortunate and to be in this position now is incredible To be able to document some history and salute the guys that are helping to build it and make it better is just awesome.

How have you seen gospel drumming evolve?

JD: My early experiences in drumming was a snare drum and a bass drum. I remember going south and just having a bass drum and sometimes there was a woman playing the bass drum, with an impeccable groove. Now, we're talking about a church that had a cold stove in the middle of it, a bass drum to the right and a bunch of people with tambourines. I watched them graduate to putting a bass drum up with a pedal and a snare drum. The person who played the snare drum played with two hands on the snare and was sort of dancing. It created a jovial style so everyone learned to move and bounce with rejoicing. Every now and then you'd hear a lot accent, which helped with the flow of the church and would sing songs over them. Then they got a little cymbal which was a "Bash;" It wasn't a ride or a crash but they sort of bashed it. I remember hearing a song called, "Climbing up the Mountain" out of Detroit with the Southwest Michigan Choir, and it was at a moderate tempo. The drummer, towards the middle of the song, did an off beat accent and I thought "Wow, that was incredible." So as soon as I got back to church, that was the first thing that I did. It's just unbelievable how we gone from 2 hands on the snare to what I call "The [Steve] Gadd Formula" because he was one of the most notables that played cross hand, open hand and even left handed, which is very interesting as well. All of these things in church I believe we got it secondary. It's a lot of stuff we've learned because of the ebb and flow or vibe of the music. It wasn't technically taught but it was I guess emotionally brought. We kind of got it that way. Then we found out in the full circle of things that there was a technical aspect that you needed to your application to be exact, to some was an insult. For some of the older guys, they didn't and wouldn't change. And then for all of the guys who wanted to graduate and grow, they migrated to books, studying and different things. Here we are now with arrangements, songbooks, and transcriptions of drum solos in gospel. It's incredible, it's really incredible. It gives everyone an opportunity to replay what they heard. If I had to give a list of my top 10 favorite gospel songs, I probably wouldn't know where to begin because there are so many. There are so many that stand out and they're great performances. If I had to give my top 10 of secular performances, guys like Tony Williams, Gadd and Vinnie [Colaiuta] would stand out. Vinnie is my heavyweight champion of the world. But when you have guys coming on like Thomas Pridgen, Aaron [Spears], and Ronald Brunner, Jr., Thomas Lang, Marco Minni, Jojo Mayer and the list never stops. Which to me say, you can always learn and you can always grow. You never stop. There's always somewhere to go.

I think that's the best thing about being a musician, you can always be teachable. You remain teachable. You never arrive which I think is cool even though a lot of guys think they do. Actually, you never really arrive and you continue to learn. If you are well versed in a bunch of styles, there's always something that you're not. So you go over and try to figure those things out. It's a great way to keep ego out. Just learn something that you can't play.

APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Chops: A term that refers to the technical virtuosity that a drummer possesses.

Fills: Rhythmic variation played on the drums that delineate the end of a musical phrase or section.

Ghost Note: Light, accompanying and unaccented note. Also known as inner beats.

Kratophany: 1) a manifestation of power rendered through the spoken word and its accompanying gestures. 2) The surplus of deep stirrings, intensity, and zeal within the African spirit, easily expressed in African Languages by means of rhythm, tone, and pitch.

Lick: A musical fragment or phrase that exists within the common vocabulary of gospel drummers.

Linear Drumming/Fills: An approach where each drum surface—be it the hi-hat cymbal, snare, kick, and toms—is performed separately, creating a unique, broken up effect.

Open-Handed Playing: Playing with the right hand on the snare as the left hand moves to the hi-hat.

Pocket: Playing together, with or without a vocal accompaniment, perfectly on-beat and never missing a note or going off tempo in any way.

Shed Session: 1) A platform where musicians congregate and perform together in an open environment. 2) A gathering where a group of musicians practice together while trading musical ideas including but not limited to fills, grooves, and patterns.

Shout Music: A style of music that accompanies Kratophany [also known as "Bump"). This music is performed at a brisk tempo with the bass drum played on beats one and three, the snare on beats 2 and 4, and a moving bass line similar to a walking jazz/blues line.

APPENDIX C

IRB APPROVAL

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From: UNCG IRB

Date: 11/12/2013

RE: Determination that Research or Research-Like Activity does not require IRB Approval
Study #: 13-0470
Study Title: Gospel Chops: The History and Evolution of Contemporary Gospel Drumming

This submission was reviewed by the above-referenced IRB. The IRB has determined that this submission does not constitute human subjects research as defined under federal regulations [45 CFR 46.102 (d or f)] and does not require IRB approval.

Study Description:

This study will trace the evolution of gospel drumming in America beginning with Walter Hawkins *Love Alive* Album in 1975 through James Fortune's "Identity" Album of 2012. This study will trace advancements in grooves, patterns, techniques, playing styles, and the growth of skill level within the realm of gospel drummers.

If your study protocol changes in such a way that this determination will no longer apply, you should contact the above IRB before making the changes.
CC:
Neeraj Mehta, Music Performance